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Summary



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THE  
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE  
OF  
CHRISTIAN PERFECTION  
STATED AND DEFENDED:  
WITH  
A CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL EXAMINATION  
OF  
THE CONTROVERSY,  
BOTH ANCIENT AND MODERN.  
ALSO  
PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS AND ADVICES.  
IN A SERIES OF LECTURES.

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BY REV. GEORGE PECK, D. D.

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NEW-YORK:  
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## P R E F A C E.

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IT is a correct opinion, and one generally admitted, that no one should obtrude a new book upon the public without good reason. He must have something important to communicate—must be able to shed new light upon some theme or doctrine which holds an intimate relation to the good of society—or he must, at least, attempt to restore some neglected or rejected truth to its proper influence, or to defend it against the assaults of error.

The reason which has induced the author at this time to execute the laborious task of writing a book on *Christian Perfection* is, that in his opinion it is *wanted*. The subject has been discussed in various forms, and a variety of theories have within a few years been presented. Efforts have not been wanting to modify the true Scriptural and Wesleyan theory, in such a manner as materially to mar its symmetry, and to injure its practical influence. A spurious origin has also been given, and a relationship to exploded heresies erroneously attributed to the doctrine. Add to this, that too many who acknowledge the truth of the doctrine are little concerned for its practical influence—are too indifferent in relation to its experimental and practical bearings. These facts have deeply impressed the mind of the writer with a conviction that a thorough historical, exegetical, argumentative, and practical investigation of the subject is loudly called for by present emergencies.

The writer professes no new light—broaches no new theory; his views, as far as he understands the subject, are strictly *Wesleyan*. These views he has endeavoured to free from false glosses, to vindicate against objections, and to enforce by reasons which address themselves to the highest principles and susceptibilities of our nature.

The doctrinal and practical lectures were delivered in several churches in the city of New-York during the

winter of 1840-41. The historical, and some of the controversial matter, has been added. The form of *lectures* has been retained, as being, upon the whole, the most convenient.

The historical portion of the work may, by some, be supposed to occupy an undue proportion of it. But when it is considered that the subject has seldom, if ever, been discussed historically, and that a want of light upon the different forms and phases of the controversy has materially embarrassed the subject, and been the cause of no little misjudgment in relation to it, the work will not be considered faulty in this respect.

The course adopted has necessarily led to numerous references to the writings both of the friends and enemies to the doctrine of Christian perfection. The writer first hesitated between the plan of stating objections and arguments without giving the authorities, and the one finally adopted, which is to quote authorities for almost every thing which bears at all upon the controversy. He finally fell upon the latter course, as best calculated to guard him against the charge of presenting objections to our system, and views on the other side, which are entirely apocryphal, and merely got up for effect. For the living authors quoted, in the main, the writer has a high and sincere respect, and is not conscious of having done them injustice.

It would have been a much more pleasant task, could he have done it consistently with a sense of duty, to have waived the consideration of the polemics of the question. Controversy, though sometimes necessary, owing to the manner in which it is prosecuted is not always happy in its results. The writer has endeavoured to avoid the bitterness of feeling which is but too common in religious controversies, and to deal kindly with those from whom he is compelled to differ.

The whole is submitted to the inquisitive and candid reader with ardent prayers that it may assist him in the great business of his salvation.

GEORGE PECK.

*New-York, November 10, 1842.*



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THE  
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE  
OF  
CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

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LECTURE I.

WE MUST LEAVE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES.

“Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.” Heb. vi, 1-3.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews is suited to the character of such as had been really converted from Judaism, and had experimentally “received the knowledge of the truth.” In the opening of the third chapter, the apostle calls those he addresses “holy brethren,” a designation which could with no propriety be given “the unbelieving Jews,” as is supposed by Dr. Mac-knight, but which supposes that they had in a good sense “been once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift.”

This position is clearly taken in the address contained in the text which I make the foundation of the present lecture. It is assumed that the persons addressed had once “laid the foundation of repentance from dead works,” &c.



In this lecture my object shall be, *first*, to speak of the principles we are required to leave ; and *secondly*, to show in what sense they are to be left.

I. I invite attention to the principles which we are to leave.

These principles are here given in six particulars, embracing three classes. Under each class we have two intimately related principles. The first class I shall call *inward affections*, embracing, 1. "Repentance from dead works," and 2. "Faith toward God." The second, *ceremonies*: 1. "Baptism," and 2. "Laying on of hands." The third, *future retribution*: 1. "The resurrection of the dead," and 2. "Eternal judgment."

"Repentance from dead works" is repentance of all those *works* which expose the sinner to eternal death; hence called *νεκρων εργα*, *works of death*. "Faith toward God" is that faith in the being, attributes, and government of God, upon which all rational religion must be founded. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. xi, 6. "Baptisms" may refer to the outward ordinance, and the inward grace, called the baptism of the Spirit. "The laying on of hands" was practised among the Jews on several occasions, and was used by Christ and the apostles in solemnly dedicating persons to God—or consecrating them to the work of the ministry; and was accompanied by prayer for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the subject. "The resurrection of the dead," followed by the "judgment," called "eternal," because its consequences or awards are permanent and unchangeable.

We are not bound to suppose this analysis of the system of doctrines first promulgated and received, to

be perfect. The generals do indeed seem, at least by implication, to cover the whole ground of religious truth; for every part of religion relates either to the regulation of the heart, the conduct of the life, or to the future state. But under these general principles we have a part of the details for the whole. And particulars, which were made matters of special instruction, are introduced under each head as specimens.

The *της αρχης του Χριστου λογου*, *the beginning of the word of Christ*, is the same as *της αρχης των λογιων του Θεου*, *the beginning of the words, or oracles of God*. Chap. v, 12. I give this rendering, as more literal, though the common version is a tolerable expression of the sense of the original.

It seems, in chap. v, 12, to be more than insinuated that these Hebrew Christians had not made that proficiency in *first principles* which their privileges afforded reasons to expect—that they had been dull scholars, and deserved reproof for their tardiness in becoming acquainted with the great elements of Christian knowledge. But instead of giving them a long time to remedy this deficiency—instead of leaving them still longer in these elements, which it seems they had as yet but imperfectly learned, he urges them on to higher attainments. The great apostle is not of that class of teachers who permit their pupils to be satisfied with themselves when they have but imperfectly learned their lesson, or suffer them to linger and doze over their task. His motto is, *Onward*. He endeavours to arouse to action the dilatory, by pointing them to the vast heights which are before them, and which are to be ascended before they can be “perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” The method pursued is, with almost the same breath to rebuke present defectiveness,

and spur on to higher attainments: to chide past negligence, and to urge on to future fidelity and diligence.

II. Let us inquire in what sense we are required to *leave* "the principles of the doctrine of Christ."

Commentators widely differ as to the sense which should be attached to the words of the apostle in this place. The learned Peirce paraphrases the passage thus: "Wherefore I shall waive to discourse concerning the first and more obscure discoveries that were made of Christ under the old dispensation, and shall go on to offer you somewhat more solid and fit for you as adult persons, rather than feed you with milk as children."\* In this view agree Whitby, Hammond, Mac-knight, Bloomfield, and others. But Professor Stuart, in accordance with the views of Dr. Clarke and some other learned critics, considers the language as "hortatory," and gives us the following very rational paraphrase upon it:—"Wherefore," that is, since, "*τελειοι* [*the perfect*] only are capable of *στερεα τροφη*, *solid food*, viz., of receiving, digesting, and duly appreciating, the higher and more difficult doctrines of Christianity, and since ye are yet but *νηπιοι*, [*babes*], although ye ought to be advanced in Christian knowledge, if regard be had to the long time that ye have professed the Christian religion, (v. 12-14;) *διο*, *therefore*, it becomes you to quit this state of immaturity, this *νηπιότητα*, [*infancy*], and advance to a mature state, to *τελειότητα*," *perfection*. The meaning of *αφεντες*, *leaving*, in this place, he thinks to be "quitting the mere initial state of pupilage, advancing forward to a maturer state of instruction and knowledge; or, making such advances, that it shall be unnecessary

\* See Paraphrases and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul.



to repeat *elementary* instruction in the principles of Christianity.”\*

We are not to understand “*leaving*” in the sense of abandoning, as prejudicial or useless. As say the Westminster divines : “ Not that we are to neglect the first principles of religion, but to labour for a greater measure of knowledge. 2 Pet. iii, 18. It is as if he had said, Seeing it is a shame always to be babes, let us, as men grown, seek after stronger meat. *Leaving*—Not casting them for ever behind our backs, suffering them to slip quite out of our memories ; but, not staying only upon these, let us go forward, as good travellers, in our Christian race.”†

*First*, then, we do not understand that we are admonished by the apostle in these words to cease from holding these principles, as parts of the gospel.

They are essential principles in the system, which no state of Christian knowledge or experience can dispense with. Were they to be set down among Jewish rites, they might now be considered as superseded—as constituting a part of a system which is “ waxing old, and is ready to vanish away.” But they are called “ the doctrine of Christ,” a designation never given to the shadowy rites of the Jewish dispensation. Macknight says, “ I agree with Peirce in thinking ‘ the principles of Christ ’ mean the principles of the doctrine of Christ as contained in the writings of Moses and the prophets.”‡ And in accordance with this view he translates the passage, “ dismissing the discourse of the principles of Christ,” &c. But both the translation and the paraphrase, as I conceive, greatly weaken the force of the passage, and give it a wrong sense.

\* See Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, *in loc.*

† Assembly’s Annotations, *in loc.*

‡ Macknight on the Epistles, *in loc.*

For "the principles of the doctrine of Christ, as contained in the writings of Moses and the prophets," are not to be abandoned or dismissed. All of the law and the prophets that is evangelical is so far from being left in the background by Christ and the apostles, that it is brought forward and considered a part of the gospel, and is indeed taught and enforced as all-important, and to be dispensed with under no circumstances.

*Secondly.* Nor do we understand, by these words of the apostle, that we may cease to practise upon these principles. Can we ever cease to repent of our dead works, or to believe in God; or to admit the importance and acknowledge the obligations of our baptism; or to recognise the gift of the Holy Ghost in answer to prayer; or to act with a constant reference to the resurrection of the just and the unjust, and the eternal judgment that is to follow? These principles are identical with Christianity itself, and cannot be put away without repudiating the whole system. As matters of practice, they must be imbodied in the lives of all the members of Christ's mystical body, while their probation continues.

*Thirdly.* Nor may we suppose ourselves authorized from this passage to leave the work of inculcating these principles. Wherever the ambassadors of Christ come, they open their commission by testifying "repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;" by calling on men to "repent and be baptized for the remission of sins;" assuring them that upon these terms they "shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." A specimen of grouping several of these principles together in a few words, we have in the sermon of Peter, delivered after the cure of the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple. Acts iii,

19-21. Says he, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Here the duty of repentance, the privilege of pardon, and the refreshings of the Holy Spirit, are connected with the coming of Christ, and the restitution of all those things spoken by the prophets, or the final retribution. These principles are, indeed, far more frequently insisted upon than the higher attainments of grace; doubtless for the reason that the great mass of men still "lie in the wicked one"—have not so much as begun to lay "the foundation of repentance from dead works." We must, then, not neglect to teach these principles in the abstract. We must bring them out fully and frequently. We must enforce them plainly and powerfully. They must have a prominence in all our public and private instructions, such as they had of old in the discourses and epistles of the holy apostles.

But there is still a sense, an important sense, in which we must leave these "first principles."

We must not rest in them. Being mere elements, we must not suppose that, abstractly considered, they constitute the whole system. From the abstract we must proceed to consider them, and act upon them in the concrete; that is, in their connections and relations with other parts of the perfect whole. For illustration: We must leave these "first principles," as the pupil leaves the alphabet, when he is brought to the process of combining letters into syllables, and syllables into words, and of words constructing sen-

tences, and of sentences making a discourse. We must leave them, as the architect leaves the foundation, and proceeds to erect upon it his superstructure. We must leave them, as the mathematician leaves his axioms, and proceeds to the construction of his demonstration.

To what purpose would the pupil have learned the elements of language if he should rest in them? Where the use of continuing to con them over, without proceeding any further? What benefit would result from the labour and expense of laying the best foundation, if it remain unappropriated—if no building be reared upon it? How long might the mathematician occupy himself in ascertaining the axioms of the science, without coming at a single valuable result? And what advantage will accrue to us, or to the world, from our acquiring the mere elements of Christianity, without reducing them to practice, pushing them out to their ulterior results, and connecting them with the higher principles of a spiritual life?

There are, indeed, no stationary positions in religion. We shall never, until we get to heaven, and probably not even then, be able to say, we have reached the summit of excellence, and can advance no further. Much less can we consistently take such a position upon our first entrance into the school of Christ. Then especially should we feel that we have but just commenced our course—that we have only started in a race which is to be prosecuted with vigour and perseverance to the end. And the sooner we leave mere elements the better. The great law of habit constantly operates. If we settle down contentedly in our first attainments, every moment's delay there fixes us the more firmly, and renders it the more difficult for us to strike our tents and move onward to greener



pastures and more fruitful fields. We every day become better and better satisfied with our attainments; until we lose the things which we had wrought; and it may be said in truth, that having begun in the Spirit, we are made perfect in the flesh.

Any foundation, be it ever so firmly laid, if left unoccupied, will very soon go to decay, and finally become a mass of ruins. So the mere elements of Christian character will soon be lost, unless we proceed to advanced ground. To a church which had not been sufficiently mindful of this important truth, the great apostle gives a most striking admonition: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whom Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain." Gal. iii, 1-4. Again he says, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." And again: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you." Chap. v, 4, 7, 8. And Christ says, to the angel of the church of Ephesus, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Rev. ii, 1, 4, 5. The talent which the servant hid in a napkin was soon "taken away from him," and he "cast into outer darkness," Matt. xxv, 28, 30.

From all this we see most clearly, that to come to a pause at the commencement of the course is equal to a retreat. It is at least the commencement of a retrograde movement. It has often been said, with great truth, that there is no standing still in religion. Like the vessel in the current without sail or oars, we necessarily glide down the stream. Resting is the certain precursor of a fatal decline in practical godliness, and continued in, will finally result in apostacy and ruin. If, then, we do not wish to end in the flesh—to fall from grace—to lose our first love—to be deprived of the talent committed to us—to have the candlestick removed out of its place—and finally to be cast into outer darkness—we must “leave the things which are behind, and go forward to those which are before.”

It can be scarcely necessary further to prove that defection is always the result of resting in low attainments. The position is sustained by the general tenor of Scripture instruction and warning directed to the church in her militant state. We are clearly told by our Lord, that it was “while men slept” that the devil “sowed” his “tares.” And it is in accordance with too much sad experience, that the spirit of quietude and self-complacency which too often follows a profession of religion, is the beginning of a sad decline even in elementary principles. An old father says, “the soul’s idling time is the devil’s working time.” And quite too many have proved by sad experiment the truth of the maxim.

How fully, then, should all who have been converted and inducted into the church—who have entered their names among the sacramental hosts of God’s elect—be impressed with the fact that the race is yet to be run, that the battle is yet to be fought! It does

not become them, having just "put on the harness," to "boast as him that putteth it off." Nay, brethren, do not be satisfied with your novitiate. Leave "first principles," and press onward and upward in the name of the Lord. To pause is to go back—and to go back is to perish.

From what has been advanced, the following reflections seem to be naturally suggested:—

1. That a portion—alas! but too large a portion—of those who have embraced religion occupy ground, to say the least, extremely doubtful.

How common a case it is for persons to rest satisfied with their first small attainments in religion, and never to think of any thing further! They have passed through a distressing struggle with guilt and fear, and have obtained peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The world, the flesh, and the devil, held them long in bondage, until by the power of grace, after a dubious conflict, perhaps of long continuance, they were enabled to overcome. They now rejoice in God, and praise his delivering goodness. Their language is, "O Lord, I will praise thee; for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." Thus far, all is well. But how often is this state of mind succeeded by a state of lukewarmness and spiritual apathy! How many thank God for the first victory they have gained, and then act as though they considered their enemies all slain! Falling asleep in the lap of Delilah, they awake no more until totally shorn of their strength. If they do not, in theory, embrace the soul-paralyzing doctrine, that a Christian's hopes are the brightest, and his joys the purest and strongest, the first few days or weeks of his spiritual existence, they do act as though they had little or nothing higher to expect in this world. They

thank God they are converted, and there they rest. Having beaten the enemy at the first onset, they leave him to retire to his stronghold and fortify himself, or prepare for another attack, while they are engaged in feasting upon the spoils of victory.

When Hannibal had defeated the Romans upon the plains of Italy, nothing was wanted but a determined spirit of perseverance, to give him the possession of Rome itself. But, flushed with their victory, the Carthagenians spent the time in rioting on the spoils which should have been employed in pushing their conquests. In the mean time the Romans collected their whole strength, and soon proved more than a match for their terrible invaders. Our foe is wily and powerful, and we can only maintain our ground against him by pushing forward our conquests. When he is beaten at one point, he fortifies another; and when he detects some weakness in our fortifications, he resumes the attack, and often with fatal effect.

How many, or how few, among the mass of those who profess the religion of Christ, and who have given good evidence of a change of heart, are in this perilous state, I do not pretend to say. But that this is the condition of multitudes there is too much reason to believe. But a transient view of the present aspect of the Christian churches will be quite sufficient to awaken the deepest concern in the thoughtful mind. Where is that onward and aggressive movement—where that holy violence—where that pressing forward, which characterizes the kingdom of Christ as portrayed in the inspired volume? We boast of our peace: it is well if it is not the peace of the dead. We glory in our triumphs: well, indeed, if they be not triumphs over an artful foe, who has only given a little ground, that he may get us more fully into his



power. The ocean is often still—beautifully smooth, just before a storm ; and the stagnant pool is none the less pestiferous because it is not agitated by the tempest. Jehovah says, “Wo to them that are at ease in Zion !” Arise, brethren, in the name of God, for “this is not your rest.” Leave “first principles.” Cast your eye up the heights of Zion, and see what glories are before you. Make your mark high. Content not yourselves with the little you have experienced and done. “There is much land yet to be possessed.” Stay not on the border of the spiritual Canaan, like “the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh,” while the best of the promised land is on the other side of Jordan, and is as free for you as for others.

2. Remaining in a state of mere pupilage, while we have the means for higher attainments, is dishonourable to us, and offensive to God.

How cutting is the reproof which the apostle administers to the Hebrew converts for their low attainments ! “For when,” says he, “for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God,” Heb. v, 12. Small progress under great privileges is a grievous fault. The scholar who has time, and books, and excellent instructors, and yet learns nothing, is soon given up as incorrigible. He soon loses caste, is degraded, is censured by his friends, and is condemned by all. The man of business who, by negligence or prodigality, loses his customers, and so suffers his business to run down, is despised, and, when the pinching hand of poverty seizes him, is unpitied.

And what shall be said of us, if we fail to learn under the instructions of our heavenly Teacher, and, with the

plenitude of means within our reach for "laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come," remain in a state of spiritual destitution and wretchedness? Has God any honours for us? Shall we have a competency when winter comes? Will we hear from the mouth of the Judge in the day of Jesus Christ, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" Or will it be said in thunder tones, "Take the unprofitable servant, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth?" Let those who live in the bosom of the church—who enjoy the light of truth shining in its brightness—see that their improvement is, at least measurably, proportionable to the means put into their hands. Much light, and an abundance of spiritual influences, connected with no progress, or very slow progress in religion is shameful. Where, my brethren, ought we now to have been, in view of what God has done for us? We should have been men and women, but we are mere children. We might have been giants, but, alas! we are mere dwarfs. How can we look our Judge in the face, when he shall say, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward?" O! for a holy ambition to do something like what we ought to do before we die! When will we be wise? when properly awake to our true interests? When shall we seek, above every thing, "the honour that cometh from God?"

3. Leaving "first principles," and going on to perfection, is the only way to be secure against final and total apostacy.

This position is most clearly implied in the course of argumentation pursued by the apostle in the text and its connections. He urges the Hebrew Christians to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to

go on to perfection, by the consideration that it is impossible to renew those unto repentance who, after being once enlightened, &c., shall fall away ;—taking it for granted, as a matter of course, that those who do not regard his admonitions, and leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, &c., will “fall away.” Is not this a terrible consideration? Says Richard Allen: “As to believers, who have already obtained grace, my word to them is, Follow on toward perfection, in fear of falling back from, or walking unworthy of, that grace wherein you stand.”\*

I know, brethren, you do not intend to apostatize, and so pour contempt upon the cause of Christ; nothing is further from your thoughts. You mean to “hold fast whereunto you have attained, that no one take your crown.” But how do you carry out this good purpose? Is it in God’s appointed way? In what does your safety consist? If in the strength of your own resolutions, you will soon be overcome. God must sustain you by constant supplies of grace, or you are without defence. On what terms has he promised to do this? On condition of your remaining stationary? Not at all. The apostle Peter tells us: “And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” 2 Peter i, 5–9.

So then, according to the apostle, the way to be

\* Wesley’s Christian Library, vol. xviii, p. 474.

fruitful “in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”—to be prosperous, safe, and happy in our Christian course, is to “*add* to our faith, virtue,” &c. And those who “lack these things,” that is, do not proceed to “add,” &c., are “blind—and have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins.” The note of Dr. A. Clarke upon this passage sets the subject in a clear and strong light:—

“*But he that lacketh these things—*He, whether Jew or Gentile, who professes to have faith in God, and has not added to that FAITH *fortitude, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and universal love, is blind*; his understanding is darkened, *and cannot see afar off*; *μωπάζιον, shutting his eyes against the light, winking, not able to look truth in the face*; nor to behold that God whom he once knew was reconciled to him: and thus it appears he is *wilfully blind, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*; has, at last, through his nonimprovement of the grace which he received from God, his faith ceasing to work by love, lost the evidence of things not seen; for having grieved the Holy Spirit, by not showing forth the virtues of him who called him into his marvellous light, he has lost the testimony of his sonship; and thus, darkness and hardness having taken the place of *light and filial confidence*, he first calls all his former experience into doubt, and questions whether he had not put enthusiasm in the place of religion. By these means his darkness and hardness increase, his memory becomes indistinct and confused; till, at length, he forgets the work of God on his soul; next denies it; and at last asserts, that the knowledge of salvation, by the remission of sins, is impossible; and that no man can be saved from sin in this life. Indeed, some go so far as to deny the Lord that bought



them ; to renounce Jesus Christ having made atonement for them ; and finish their career of apostacy by utterly denying his Godhead. Many cases of this kind have I known ; and they are all the consequence of believers not continuing to be workers together with God, after they had experienced his pardoning love.”\*

What stronger motives, then, can possibly be presented to induce us to leave the beginning and advance rapidly toward the completion of our Christian character ? It is our honour, our glory, and our crown of rejoicing. It is our safety against the incursions of the grand adversary of our souls, and the return of our lusts to their former dominion. It is our only security against utter apostacy, the dismal gulf of infidelity, and the pit of hell ! What say you then, brethren. The young, who have but just entered upon their Christian course—who have scarcely yet learned the elements of the system : and the old, who have made but little progress toward perfection—who, though you have been for many years members of the church, are yet mere children in experience ; “having need of milk, and not of strong meat :”—is it not high time for you all to cast your eyes over the length and breadth of the land ? to go on and drive out the enemies of the Lord ? Rest is inglorious—protracted childhood criminal. O for a shaking among the dry bones of the valley !—for a mighty resurrection in the church—for a simultaneous onward movement, on the part of those who have enrolled their names with the army of Israel ! Spirit of the Holy One ! come into our hearts, and dwell there for evermore !

\* Commentary on the place.

## LECTURE II.

## THE NATURE OF PERFECTION.

“Let us go on unto perfection,” Hebrews vi, 1.

IN the preceding lecture I endeavoured to show that we must leave elementary principles, and the state of novitiates, and advance. In this my object shall be to exhibit the mark at which we are to direct our efforts. We must “go on unto perfection.”

And that we may not act at random, or fight as those who beat the air, it will be necessary, if possible, to have definite views of that perfection at which we are to aim. I shall consequently, in the first place, attempt to ascertain the meaning of the term perfection, as it is to be understood in the text, and in similar passages. Several commentators suppose that by perfection, here, the apostle means the higher degrees of knowledge. Macknight says: “The apostle calls the knowledge of the doctrines and promises of the gospel, as typically set forth in the covenant with Abram, and darkly expressed in the figures and prophecies of the law, *τελειοτης*, *perfection*, either in allusion to the Greeks, who termed the complete knowledge of their mysteries *τελειοτης*, or *τελειωσις*, *perfection*; or in allusion to what he had said chap. v, 14, that strong meat belongs to *τελειων*, full-grown men.”

Perfection here unquestionably implies an advanced state of knowledge; but this is but a small part of what I conceive to be embraced. I much prefer the thorough views of Dr. Clarke to those of Macknight and others who agree with him. This distinguished

critic paraphrases the passage thus: “ ‘*Let us go on to perfection*’—Let us never rest till we are adult Christians; till we are saved from all sin, and are filled with the spirit and power of Christ.”

In endeavouring to have right conceptions of the doctrine of *Christian perfection*, we may be somewhat aided by a correct understanding of the simple idea of perfection in the abstract. Perfection signifies *completeness*. Hooker says: “We count those things perfect which want nothing requisite for the end whereunto they were instituted.” So any thing that is *complete in its kind* is *perfect*.

As to the different kinds of perfection, or the different applications of the term, after an examination of a large number of critics upon the subject, the following, from Bailey’s “*Dictionarium Britannicum*,”\* is the most satisfactory:—

The adjective *perfect* he defines “[perfectus, L.,] entire; to which nothing is wanting, or that has all the requisites; also, excellent, accomplished; also, arrant; [*i. e.*, *mere, downright*;†] also, well skilled in.”

“PERFECTION, the state or condition of that which is perfect; also excellency, great accomplishment.

“*Absolute* PERFECTION, is that wherein all imperfection is excluded, such as is that of God, or *secundum quid*, and in its kind.

“*Essential* PERFECTION, is the possession of all the essential attributes; or of all the parts necessary to the integrity of a substance.

“*Natural* PERFECTION, is that whereby a thing has all its powers or faculties; and those, too, in their full

\* Folio, printed 1730.

† Phillips, (1706,) Kersey, (1708,) and Bailey, give this definition to *arrant*. Now it is obsolete.

vigour ; all its parts, both principal and secondary ; and those in their due proportion, constitution, &c.

“*Moral* PERFECTION, is an eminent degree of virtue, or moral goodness, to which men arrive by frequently repeated acts of beneficence, piety, &c.”

This definition of “moral perfection” is lax, but is a true exhibition of the sense in which the term was employed by many theologians of the last two centuries. The Wesleyan view of moral or Christian perfection is, that completeness of the Christian character which is required and promised in the gospel, “to which men arrive,” not so much “by frequently repeated acts of beneficence, piety, &c.,” as by *a true and living faith*.

After this general view of the philology of the subject, I shall proceed to a discussion of its elements, as they are presented in the Scriptures, and in the writings of several classes of theologians.

In the first place, then, let us inquire, What light do we derive from the Scriptures upon the subject ?

I need not attempt to prove, that perfection of some sort is held out in the Bible as an attainable state. No one will deny this. The simple announcement of the text, which I make my motto, is sufficient warrant for the assumption at present. And it may now be taken for granted that it is the *thing* we mean by *Christian perfection*, and not the name, that is deemed objectionable : for it is difficult to perceive how serious and intelligent Christians can object to *language* so strongly sanctioned by Scripture use. What, then, is the perfection held up in the Scriptures as attainable and obligatory ?

If man were mere matter, his highest perfection might consist in his physical organization, the proportions of his various parts, and the beauty of his form :



if he were a mere animal, then his highest excellence might consist in the perfection of his animal functions—sensations, instincts, &c.: if he were merely an intellectual being, his greatest glory would be in the strength and quickness of his intellectual faculties or his understanding. But as he is a moral being, his highest perfection must consist in likeness to his great Author in his moral character—it must consist in “the beauty of holiness.” To Christian perfection, then, we must necessarily attach the idea of *holiness*, or *sanctification to the fullest extent of which we are capable in our present state*:—what St. Paul means by being sanctified *wholly*, (1 Thess. v, 23,) and by standing *complete in all the will of God*. Col. iv, 12.

Sanctification is the renovation of the heart; but the term, unqualified, does not always, or even generally, imply what we mean by Christian perfection. Justification implies pardon. But simultaneously with the sinner’s being taken into favour, he is born again, or regenerated. This is a real change wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God. And those thus changed or regenerated are often in the writings of the apostles called holy, and sanctified. Mr. Wesley says: “The term *sanctified* is continually applied by St. Paul to all that were justified. By this term alone he rarely, if ever, means, ‘saved from all sin;’” and “that, consequently, it is not proper to use it in that sense, without adding the word *wholly*, *entirely*, or the like.”\*

Hence, to speak of a sanctified state simply as a state of entire freedom from sin, would be, in the view of Mr. Wesley, to depart from the general usage of St. Paul. It would be equally foreign from the views both of St. Paul and Mr. Wesley, to speak of those

\* Plain Account of Christian Perfection, 18mo., pp. 51, 52.

who are not sanctified *wholly* as in a state of *damning* sin. For they are justified and born anew, and consequently adopted into God's family. And though their sanctification may not be complete, they have the promise of eternal life, and of course have the pledge of complete sanctification, if they should be cut off by death in that state. It is most absurd to suppose that a justified soul can be lost, without having forfeited his justification by backsliding.

Mr. Wesley, in many places, speaks in very strong terms of the blessedness of a state of justification, and applies the language of Scripture to that state, which certainly implies a high degree of triumph over the lusts of the flesh. The following may be considered as specimens of a large class of passages which might be quoted :—

“An immediate and constant fruit of this faith whereby we are born of God, a fruit which can in no wise be separated from it, no, not for an hour, is power over sin ;—power over outward sin of every kind ; over every evil word and work ; for wheresoever the blood of Christ is thus applied, it ‘purgeth the conscience from dead works ;’—and over inward sin ; for it purifieth the heart from every unholy desire and temper.”\*

Again :—

“Now, the word of God plainly declares, that even those who are justified, who are born again in the lowest sense, ‘do not continue in sin ;’ that they cannot ‘live any longer therein,’ Rom. vi, 1, 2 ; that they are ‘planted together in the likeness of the death’ of Christ, verse 5 ; that their ‘old man is crucified with him,’ the body of sin being destroyed, so that henceforth they do not serve sin ; that being dead with Christ, they are free from sin, ver. 6, 7 ; that they are ‘dead unto sin,

\* Works, vol. i, p. 155.

and alive unto God,' verse 11 ; that 'sin hath no more dominion over them,' who are 'not under the law, but under grace ;' but that these, 'being free from sin, are become the servants of righteousness,' ver. 14, 18."\*

And again :—

"Is every man, as soon as he believes, a new creature, sanctified, pure in heart? Has he then a new heart? Does Christ dwell therein? And is he a temple of the Holy Ghost?—All these things may be affirmed of every believer, in a true sense. Let us not, then, contradict those who maintain it. Why should we contend about words?"†

The state of the justified is here represented to be truly elevated and glorious. Sin does not reign—is suspended, is crucified. And yet, by all these strong expressions, and by the application, to a merely justified state, of so many striking passages upon the subject of the triumphs of grace, from the sacred writers, this great and good man did not intend to be understood to teach that no inbred sin remains in the justified. Let these passages be compared with his sermon on "Sin in Believers."‡ Here he teaches that *sin may exist where it does not reign*, and pronounces the contrary opinion "absolutely contrary to all experience, all Scripture, all common sense." His views upon this subject are very clearly expressed in his sermon on Ephes. ii, 8, as follows :—

"But we are at present concerned only with that salvation which the apostle is directly speaking of. And this consists of two general parts, justification and sanctification.

"Justification is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveness of all our sins ; and, what is necessarily

\* Works, vol. i, p. 359.

† Ibid., vol. v, p. 205.

‡ Works, vol. i, p. 108.

implied therein, our acceptance with God. The price whereby this hath been procured for us, (commonly termed the meritorious cause of our justification,) is the blood and righteousness of Christ; or, to express it a little more clearly, all that Christ hath done and suffered for us, till he ‘poured out his soul for the transgressors.’ The immediate effects of justification are, the peace of God, a ‘peace that passeth all understanding,’ and a ‘rejoicing in hope of the glory of God,’ ‘with joy unspeakable and full of glory.’

“And at the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very moment, sanctification begins. In that instant we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit: there is a *real* as well as a *relative* change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel ‘the love of God shed abroad in our heart, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us,’ producing love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God; expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honour, of money; together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper; in a word, changing the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, into ‘the mind which was in Christ Jesus.’

“How naturally do those who experience such a change, imagine that all sin is gone; that it is utterly rooted out of their heart, and has no more any place therein. How easily do they draw that inference, ‘I *feel* no sin; therefore I *have* none: it does not *stir*; therefore it does not *exist*: it has no *motion*; therefore it has no *being*.’

“But it is seldom long before they are undeceived, finding sin was only suspended, not destroyed. Temptations return, and sin revives; showing it was but stunned before, not dead. They now feel two principles in themselves, plainly contrary to each other; ‘the



flesh lusting against the Spirit ;' nature opposing the grace of God. They cannot deny, that, although they still feel power to believe in Christ, and to love God ; and, although his ' Spirit [still] witnesses with their spirits, that they are children of God ;' yet they feel in themselves sometimes pride or self-will, sometimes anger or unbelief. They find one or more of these frequently *stirring* in their heart, though not *conquering* ; yea, perhaps, ' thrusting sore at them that they may fall ;' but the Lord is their help.

" How exactly did Macarius, fourteen hundred years ago, describe the present experience of the children of God ! ' The unskilful, [or unexperienced,] when grace operates, presently imagine they have no more sin. Whereas they that have discretion cannot deny, that even we who have the grace of God may be molested again.—For we have often had instances of some among the brethren, who have experienced such grace as to affirm that they had no sin in them ; and yet, after all, when they thought themselves entirely freed from it, the corruption that lurked within was stirred up anew, and they were well nigh burned up.'

" From the time of our being born again the gradual work of sanctification takes place. We are enabled, ' by the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body,' of our evil nature ; and as we are more and more dead to sin, we are more and more alive to God. We go on from grace to grace, while we are careful to ' abstain from all appearance of evil,' and are ' zealous of good works,' as we have opportunity of doing good to all men ; while we walk in all his ordinances blameless, therein worshipping him in spirit and in truth ; while we take up our cross, and deny ourselves every pleasure that does not lead us to God.

" It is thus that we wait for entire sanctification ; for

a full salvation from all our sins,—from pride, self-will, anger, unbelief; or, as the apostle expresses it, ‘go on to perfection.’”\*

Nothing can be clearer than this statement of the case, and, I might add, nothing more consonant with the experience of all who have been brought into the divine favour through faith in Christ. The soul is regenerated, but is not wholly sanctified—sin is subdued, but is not wholly taken away—the body of sin is nailed to the cross, but still occasionally struggles. The work of sanctification begun is yet to be completed. In this state the exhortation, “Let us go on to perfection,” is urged upon us, and should come home with all the weight of divine authority.

After this introduction, I shall proceed to the particular consideration of the main point, viz., *What is the perfection to which we are to press forward?* I have already said, it implies *complete holiness, or entire sanctification*. Let us, then, endeavour to analyze the great subject of entire sanctification, and try to ascertain what are its constituent principles, or elements.

Dr. Robinson gives us the following clear and comprehensive exhibition of the senses in which the verb ἁγιάζω, *hagiazō, I sanctify*, and the noun ἁγιασμός, *hagiasmos, sanctification*, are employed in the New Testament and the Septuagint:—

“ἁγιάζω, f. ἄσω, (ἅγιος q. v.) not found in Greek writers, but often used in Sept. for שָׁדַק. In N. T. pp. to render ἅγιον.

“1. to make clean, render pure. a) pp. Heb. ix, 13, ἁγιάζει πρὸς τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς καθαρότητα.

“b) metaph. to render clean in a moral sense, to purify, to sanctify. Rom. xv, 16, ἡγιασμένη ἐν πνεύ-

\* Works, vol. i, pp. 385, 386.

ματι ἁγίῳ, that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, *being purified by the Holy Spirit*, that is, by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of the Gentiles. 1 Cor. vi, 11; Ephes. v, 26; 1 Thess. v, 23; 1 Tim. iv, 5; Heb. ii, 11; x, 10, 14, 29; xiii, 12; Rev. xxii, 11.—Hence οἱ ἡγιασμένοι, *those who are sanctified*, that is, Christians in general. Acts xx, 32; xxvi, 18; 1 Cor. i, 2; Jude 1. So 1 Cor. vii, 14, ἡγιάσται ὁ ἀνὴρ—ἡγιάσται ἡ γυνή, the unbelieving husband or wife *is made clean or sanctified*, that is, is to be regarded, not as unclean, not as an idolater, but as belonging to the Christian community. See ἁγιος, 1. b. β.—So Sept. for שְׁבַח passim.

“2. *to consecrate, to devote*, that is, to set apart from a common to a sacred use; since in the Jewish ritual this was one great object of the purifications.

“a) spoken of things, Matt. xxiii, 17, ὁ ναὸς ὁ ἁγιάζων τὸν χρυσόν; xxiii, 19; 2 Tim. ii, 21, σκεῦος ἡγιασμένον. Sept. for שְׁבַח Lev. viii, 10, sq. 30.

“b) spoken of persons, *to consecrate*, as being set apart of God and sent by him for the performance of his will. John x, 36, ὃν ὁ πατὴρ ἡγίασε, *whom the Father hath consecrated* and sent into the world, &c.; xvii, 17, ἁγιάσον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ σου, *consecrate them through or in the promulgation of thy truth*, comp. ver. 18; xvii, 19, bis.—Ecclus. xlv, 4; xlix, 7.

“3. *to regard and venerate as holy, to hallow*. Matt. vi, 9, ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου. Luke xi, 2; 1 Pet. iii, 15. Sept. for שְׁבַח Isa. ix, 13; xxix, 23.

“Ἀγιασμός, οὐ, ὁ, (from ἁγιάζω, but not found in Greek writers,) pp. *consecration*, Sept. for שְׁבַח־הַ Judg. xvii, 3. In N. T. *sanctification, purity* of heart and life, *holiness*. Rom. vi, 19, 22; 1 Thess. iv, 3, 4, 7; 1 Tim. ii, 15; Heb. xii, 14.—2 Thess. ii, 13, ἐν ἁγιασμῷ πνεύματος, *sanctification of the Spirit*, that is,

produced by the Holy Spirit. 1 Pet. i, 2.—Meton. *cause or author of this sanctification*, 1 Cor. i, 30.”\*

“The word sanctify,” says Dr. Clarke, “has two meanings:—1. It signifies to consecrate, to separate from earth and common use, and to devote and dedicate to God and his service. 2. It signifies to make holy or pure.”†

The following is from Mr. Watson’s Biblical and Theological Dictionary.—“*Sanctification*, that work of God’s grace by which we are renewed after the image of God, set apart for his service, and enabled to die unto sin and live unto righteousness. Sanctification is either of nature, whereby we are renewed after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, (Ephes. iv, 24; Col. iii, 19,) or of practice, whereby we die unto sin, have its power destroyed in us, cease from the love and practice of it, hate it as abominable, and live unto righteousness, loving and studying good works. Tit. ii, 11, 12. Sanctification comprehends all the graces of knowledge, faith, repentance, love, humility, zeal, patience, &c., and the exercise of them in our conduct toward God or man. Gal. v, 22–24; 1 Peter i, 15, 16; Matt. v, vi, vii. Sanctification in this world must be complete; the whole nature must be sanctified, all sin must be utterly abolished, or the soul can never be admitted into the glorious presence of God; (Heb. xi, 14; 1 Peter i, 15; Rev. xxi, 27;) yet the saints, while here, are in a state of spiritual warfare with Satan and his temptations, with the world and its influence. 2 Cor. ii, 11; Gal. v, 17, 24; Rom. vii, 23; 1 John ii, 15, 16.”

Mr. Baxter says: “The essence of holiness, as denominated from the object, is the consent to the three

\* Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament.

† Theology, p. 182.

articles of the covenant of grace :—1. That we give up ourselves to God, as our God and reconciled Father in Jesus Christ. 2. That we give up ourselves to Jesus Christ, as our Redeemer and Saviour, to recover us, reconcile us, and bring us unto God. 3. That we give up ourselves to the Holy Ghost as our Sanctifier, to guide and illuminate us, and perfect the image of God upon us, and prepare us for glory.

“The essence of sanctification, as denominated from its opposite objects, is nothing but our renunciation and rejection of the flesh, the world, and the devil ; of pleasures, profits, and honours, as they would be preferred before God, and draw us to forsake him.

“The essence of sanctification, as denominated from our faculties, which are the subject of it, is nothing but this preferring of God, and grace, and glory, above the said pleasures, profits, and honours. 1. By the estimation of our understandings. 2. By the resolved habituate choice of our wills. 3. And in the bent and drift of our endeavours in our conversations. In these three acts, as upon the first three objects, and against the other three objects, lieth all that is essential to sanctification, and that we should judge of our sincerity, and title to salvation by, as I before showed.”\*

Further and more fully to illustrate the subject, I shall now proceed to a more extended view of the Scripture doctrine of entire sanctification.

The subject is most generally presented by the apostle as embracing two parts :—1. The death or destruction of sin ; and 2. The spiritual resurrection, or the life of grace. This will be seen clearly in Romans vi, 1–11 :—“What shall we say, then ? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound ? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer

\* Practical Works, Orme’s edition, vol. xvi, p. 202.



therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

In this passage the two great principles presented fully to view are, the death of the body of sin, and the restoration of the soul to a new and spiritual life.

And when the apostle urges the subject of entire sanctification upon the Corinthian church, he gives us the same twofold view of it: "Having therefore," says he, "these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. vii, 1. We are first to seek to eradicate our filthiness; and secondly, to perfect holiness.

1. Then sanctification, in its earliest stages, implies the subjugation of the body of sin; and *complete* sanctification implies its entire destruction.

Let us now briefly *consider* the members of the body of sin, or the old man, which are to be destroyed.

Upon this part of the subject Dr. Bates, a writer of the seventeenth century, expresses himself so pertinently and forcibly, that I cannot hope more advantageously to present the subject than in his language.\*

(1.) The first of these members may be designated *irregular desires*.—Of these Dr. Bates says: “The lusts of the desiring appetite, intemperance and uncleanness, are so polluting, that the consciousness of such crimes will cover the guilty with confusion. Of all the debasing titles, whereby the devil is charac-

\* Rev. William Bates, an eminent Nonconformist divine. He was born in November, 1625; and, after a suitable school education, was sent to Cambridge, where he was admitted of Emanuel College, from which he removed to King’s in 1644. He commenced bachelor of arts in 1647, and, applying himself to the study of divinity, became a distinguished preacher among the Presbyterians. Upon the restoration of Charles the Second, he was made one of his majesty’s chaplains; and in the November following was admitted to the degree of doctor in divinity in the University of Cambridge, by royal mandate. About the same time he was offered the deanery of Litchfield and Coventry, which he refused; and it is said that he might afterward have been raised to any bishopric in the kingdom if he would have conformed to the established Church. He was much respected by King William the Third; and Queen Mary often entertained herself in her closet with his writings. His residence during the latter part of his life was at Hackney, where he preached to a respectable society of Protestant Dissenters; and at that place he finished his course on the 14th of July, 1699, in the seventy-fourth year of his age. Mr. Howe says, Bishop Wilkins’s character of Mr. Baxter might be applied to him, that “he cultivated every subject he handled;” and that, “if he had lived in the age of the fathers, he would have been one.”—*Kipps’ Biographia Britannica*.

The full title-page of the work I quote is as follows:—“Spiritual Perfection Unfolded and Enforced. By William Bates, D.D. A.D. 1699. ‘Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,’ 2 Cor. vii, 1. London: Religious Tract Society, instituted 1799. Sold at the Depository, 56 Paternoster Row, and by the booksellers.”

terized in Scripture, none is more vilifying than that of 'the unclean spirit.' This is attributed to him from the general nature of sin: but there is such a notorious turpitude in lusts grossly carnal, that they defile and defame the sinner in a special manner, not only as a rebel against God, but the servant of corruption. The understanding is the leading supreme faculty; sense, that rules in beasts, should serve in man. Now what does more vilify him, than to be dissolved in filthy pleasures, to be drowned in a sea of wine; than a life sensual and dissolute, drawn out in a continual connection of dreggy delights? Gaming succeeds feasting; the ball follows the comedy; the impurities of the night, the intemperance of the day. Sensual lusts degrade men from the nobility of their nature, the dignity of their condition, as if they were all flesh, and had not a spirit of heavenly original, to regulate and restrain their lower appetites within the limits of purity and honour. The slaves of sense 'are like the beasts that perish,' *Psa. xlix, 12*. He that is a beast by choice, is incomparably more vile than a beast by nature. It would infect the air to speak, and pollute the paper to write, their secret abominations, wherein they lie and languish; and it is natural for men to die in those sins wherein they live; they seal their own damnation by impenitence.

"How difficult the purification of these passions is, experience makes evident. The radicated habits of uncleanness and intemperance are rarely cured. We must first die to ourselves, before we can be born of ourselves; the forsaking a sinful course is necessary antecedently to the ordering the conversation according to the rules of virtue. How few instances are there, of persons recovered from the practice and bondage of those lusts, by the wise counsels of philosophers! It

is in vain to represent to them, that sensual lusts are prolific of many evils ; that intemperance is pregnant with the seeds of many diseases ; it prepares matter that is inflammable into fevers ; it is attended with the gout, stone, colic, dropsy, &c., which are incomparably more tormenting than the pernicious pleasures of taste are delightful. Represent to them the foul progeny of lasciviousness, rottenness in the body, wasting the estate, infamy, to sacrifice what is most valuable for the sake of a vile passion ; the wisest considerations are lost upon them, they are too weak a bridle to check their brutish lusts.”\*

(2.) The next is *anger*.—“ Of all the passions none is less capable of counsel, nor more rebellious against the empire of reason. It darkens the mind, and causes such a fierce agitation of the spirits, as when a storm fills the air with black clouds and terrible flashes of lightning. It often breaks forth so suddenly, that as some acute diseases, if checked at first, become more violent, there is no time for remedy, nor place for cure ; so there is such an irrevocable precipitancy of the passions, that the endeavour to repress their fury enrages them. It is astonishing what enormous excesses and mischiefs are caused by it ! how many houses are turned into dens of dragons, how many kingdoms into fields of blood, by this fierce passion !”†

(3.) The next, *covetousness*.—“ Covetousness is a diffusive evil, that corrupts the whole soul.

“ 1. It is radically in the understanding. Men are first enchanted in their opinion of riches, and then chained by their affections. The worldly-minded over-value riches, as the only real and substantial happiness : the treasures of heaven, which are spiritual and

\* Spiritual Perfection, pp. 19, 20.      † Ibid., pp. 28, 29.

future, are slighted as dreams, that have no existence but in the imagination. They see no convincing charms in grace and glory. The lustre of gold dazzles and deceives them; they will not believe it is dirt. Gold is their sun and shield, that supplies them with the most desirable good things in their esteem, and preserves them from the most fearful evils. Gain is their main design, and utmost aim; their contrivances and projects are, how to maintain and improve their estates; and the most pleasant exercise of their thoughts is to look over their inventory.

“2. Covetousness is principally in the will, the place of its residence; it is called ‘the love of money,’ 1 Tim. vi, 10. There is an inseparable relation between the heart and its treasure. We are directed, ‘If riches increase, set not your hearts upon them,’ Psa. lxii, 10. It is observable, that the eager desire to procure riches is often subordinate to other vicious affections, either to prodigality or pride. Prodigality excites to rapine and extortion, from the violent motive of indigence, that is its usual attendant, and from the conspiring lusts of sensuality, which languish, unless furnished with new supplies and nourishment. Or pride urges to an excessive procuring of wealth, to maintain the state and pomp of the vain-glorious. Now if these vicious affections are corrected, the inordinate desire of riches will be suddenly cured.

“But covetousness, in its proper sense, implies the seeking riches for the love of them, not respectively to their use. From hence it is the most unreasonable affection, and more inexcusable than any that are derived from the carnal appetites. Now love is the leading affection, and produces,

“(1.) Immoderate desires of riches. For what is loved for itself, is desired with an unlimited appetite.



Covetousness, like the grave, never says, It is enough. Prov. xxx, 15.

“(2.) Immoderate joy in possessing them. A covetous man is raised and ravished above himself, in the sight of his treasures; he thinks himself happy without reconciliation and communion with God, wherein heaven consists. It was a convincing evidence of Job’s sacred and heavenly temper, that he did not rejoice because his wealth was great, and his hand had gotten much. Job xxxi, 25.

“(3.) Anxious fears of losing them. The covetous suspect every shadow, are fearful of every fancy, wherein their interest is concerned. They are vexed with the apprehensions lest they should be oppressed by the rich, robbed by the poor, circumvented by the crafty, or suffer loss by innumerable unforeseen and inevitable accidents. Content is the poor man’s riches, when possession is the rich man’s torment.

“(4.) Heart-breaking sorrow in being deprived of them. If you touch their treasure, you wound their hearts. According to the rule in nature, what is possessed with joy, is lost with grief; and according to the degree of the desires, such will be the despair when they are frustrate. Poverty, in the account of the covetous, is the last of evils, that makes men absolutely desolate. Blind, unhappy wretches! eternal damnation is the extremest evil. It is infinitely better to be deprived of all their treasures, and go naked into paradise, than to fall laden with gold into the pit of perdition.

“3. Covetousness is virtually in the actions; which are to be considered either in the getting, saving, or using an estate.

“The covetous are inordinate and eager in their endeavours to get an estate. They ‘rise early, lie

down late, and eat the bread of carefulness,' Psa. cxxvii, 2. They rack their brains, waste their strength, consume their time; they toil and tire themselves to gain the present world: for when lust counsels and commands, violence executes. Their eyes and hearts, their aims and endeavours, are concentrated in the earth. 'Who will show us any good?' is their unsatisfied inquiry."\*

4. *Pride* is another of these members.—"Pride of life is joined with the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes. Pride destroyed both worlds; it transformed angels into devils, and expelled them from heaven; it degraded man from the honour of his creation, into the condition of the beasts that perish, and expelled him from paradise. I will consider the nature, several kinds and degrees of it, and the means to purify us from it.

"The nature of this vice consists in an irregular and immoderate appetite of superiority, and has two parts: the one is the affectation of honour, dignity, and power, beyond their true value and worth; the other is, the arrogating them as due to a person beyond his just desert. The kinds of it are moral and spiritual, which are sometimes concealed in the mind and will, but often declared in the aspect and actions. Accordingly it is either arrogance that attributes an undue pre-eminence to a man's self, and exacts undue respects from others; or vain-glory, that affects and is fed with praise; or ambition, that hotly aspires after high places, and titles of precedency and power; all which are comprised in the universal name of pride.

"1. Pride includes a secret conceit of our own excellences, which is the root of all its branches. Self-love is so natural, and deeply impressed in the heart,

\* Spiritual Perfection, pp. 32-35.

that there is no flatterer more subtle and concealed, more easily and willingly believed, than this affection. Love is blind toward others, and more toward one's self. Nothing can be so intimate and dear, as when the lover and the person beloved are the same. This is the principle of the high opinion and secret sentiments men entertain of their own special worth. 'The heart is deceitful above all things,' (Jer. xvii, 9,) and above all things deceitful to itself. Men look into the enchanting glass of their own fancies, and are vainly enamoured with the false reflection of their excellences. Self-love hinders the sight of those imperfections, which discovered, would lessen the liberal esteem of themselves. The soul is a more obscure object to its eye, than the most distant stars in the heavens. Seneca tells of some that had a strange infirmity in their eyes, that wherever they turned, they encountered the visible moving image of themselves. Of which he gives this reason: it proceeds from the weakness of the visive faculty, that, for want of spirits derived from the brain, cannot penetrate through the transparent air, to see objects; but every part of the air is a reflecting glass of themselves. That which he conjectured to be the cause of the natural infirmity is most true of the moral, the subject of our discourse. It is from the weakness of the mind that the judicative faculty does not discover the worth of others, but sees only a man's self, as singular in perfections, and none superior, or equal, or near to him. A proud man will take a rise from any advantage to foment pride: some from the perfections of the body, beauty, or strength; some from the circumstance of their condition, riches, or honour; and every one thinks himself sufficiently furnished with understanding. For reason being the distinguishing excellency of a man from the brutes, a defectiveness

in that is very disgraceful, and the title of fool the most stinging reproach; as is evident by our Saviour's gradation: 'Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause, is liable to judgment; whoever says, Raca, that expresses his anger contumeliously, is subject to the council; but whoever shall say, Fool, shall be punished with hell fire,' Matt. v, 22. Therefore men are apt to presume on their intellectual abilities. One says, 'I have not learning, as those who are pale with study, and whose lamps shine at midnight, but I have a stock of natural reason;' or, 'I have not a quick apprehension, but I have a solid judgment; I have not eloquence, but I speak good sense.' The high conceit of men's own worth declares itself several ways: sometimes it is transparent in the countenance; 'There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes, and their eyelids are lifted up,' Prov. xxx, 13. Sometimes it is manifest in haughty carriage; if others do not express eminent respect to them, it is resented as a neglect and injury. Their apparel, at first made to hide shame, proclaims their pride.

"2. An inordinate desire of reputation and praise is another branch of pride. The desire of praise is sowed in the human nature for excellent ends—to restrain them from those alluring lusts that will ruin their reputation, and to excite them to do things noble and beneficial to the public. Praise, the reward of doing good, is a powerful incentive to improve and secure the civil felicity. The wise king tells us, 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches,' Prov. xxii, 1. It is a recompense God has promised, 'The upright shall be praised,' Psal. cxii, 2.

"The apostle excites us to strive after universal holiness, by motives from reputation, as well as from conscience; whatsoever things are true, for conscience;

honest, for fame ; whatsoever are just and pure, for conscience ; whatsoever are lovely, for esteem ; if there be any virtue in ourselves, and praise from others, to propagate it, think on these things. Phil. iv, 8. But the inflamed desire of praise from men, the being incensed against others as envious or enemies that deny it, the assuming it for unworthy causes, (where there is no true virtue, there is no just praise,) the terminating it on ourselves, and not transferring it to God, are the effects of a vain-glorious mind. Pride undervalues goodness in itself, and respects it only for the shadow that attends it. Praise is a music so enchanting, that it inclines men to believe that to be true which is pleasing, and which they desire others should believe to be true. A philosopher, when a box of ointment of precious composition was presented to him, feeling his spirits revived with its fragrancy, broke forth with indignation against those effeminate persons that perfumed their hair and habits with it for vicious ends, and made the use of it disgraceful. But when praise, that is so sweet and powerful a motive to encourage generous minds to the exploits of virtue, is bestowed on worthless persons, it is more detestable. The poisonous flowers of false praise are pernicious to those who are deceived and pleased with them. It is the infelicity of those who are in the highest dignity, to whom it is uneasy to descend into themselves, and take a sincere, serious view of their internal state, and to whom truth is harsh and displeasing, [that] they are in great danger of being corrupted by flatterers. Flattery is the familiar figure of those who address princes : sometimes by fine fraud and unsuspected artifice they give the countenance of truth to a lie, in representing them to excel in wisdom and virtue. But if princes be so vain-glorious, that moderate praise is esteemed a dimi-



nution to their greatness, and only the strongest perfumes affect their sense, they will represent them as half deities, as second suns to the world. It was the judicious observation of Galba, in his discourse with Piso, whom he designed to be his successor in the empire of Rome, 'We speak with simplicity between ourselves; but others will rather speak with our state than with our persons.' In short, all that have an eminent advantage to bestow favours and benefits are liable to be deceived by flatterers, who are like concave glasses, that represent small objects in an exorbitant figure. They will feed the humours of those upon whom they depend, and speak things pleasing to them, and profitable to themselves. It is their surest security to remember, that flatterers have a double tongue, and speak with one to them, and with another of them.

" In short, virtue, like the sun, is crowned with its own beams, and needs no foreign lustre; and it argues a sound mind to esteem praise as resulting from virtue, and virtue for itself: but a proud man, as proud, prefers the praise and shadow of virtue before the reality; as a vain woman would rather wear a counterfeit necklace that is esteemed true, than one of the finest oriental pearls that is esteemed counterfeit.

" 3. Ambition, or the hot aspiring after high places, and titles of precedence and power, is another branch of pride. 'The desire of superiority in this instance is so natural and universal, that it is manifest in persons of the lowest rank: servants, shepherds, labourers, desire power over others in their condition. It is like fire, the more it is fed the more it is increased. Ambition, if reinforced by emulation, will venture through foul ways, by treachery, by oppression, and by indignities, to obtain dignity. If any cross accident spoil their feathers of flying to their mark, they fall into

melancholy : if any competitors be preferred, they are ready to say, it was not virtue or merit, but favour and fortune that advanced them ; and that their own desert makes them unfortunate ; according to the two properties of pride—to exalt themselves, and depress others.

“ Spiritual pride is distinguished from moral, as it more directly and immediately dishonours God. It is true, pride is the poison of every sin ; for in transgressing the divine law, men prefer the pleasing their corrupt wills and depraved appetites, before the obeying the sovereign and holy will of God : but in some sins there is a more immediate and explicit contempt of God, and especially in pride. Sins of this nature exceedingly provoke and kindle his displeasure.”\*

(5.) Another is *infidelity* or *unbelief*. This is either open or secret, universal or partial ; but in all its phases and degrees it is of the same nature. It is of the essence of infidelity to discredit the truth of God, and is the same evil thing when it has reference to a single truth of divine revelation and when it covers the whole system, and in all instances proceeds from the depravity of the heart.

“ Speculative truths obtain the present and easy assent of the mind ; but truths directive of practice, if opposite to men’s lusts, though their evidence be unexceptionable, yet the carnal mind is very averse from receiving them. This account is given of the Pharisees’ infidelity,—they repented not that they might believe in him. Matt. xxi, 32. When the will is engaged in the love of sin, and rebels against the sanctity and severity of the gospel commands, it is congruous to reject it. The corrupt affections hinder the due application of the mind to consider the motives of credibility, and stain the mind, that it does not sincerely judge of

\* Spiritual Perfection, pp. 52–58.

them. Though infidels pretend to be the only discoursing wits of the age, to have the oracles of reason in their breasts, and despise others as captives of a blind belief, yet their folly is palpable and penal; for having provoked God by their infidelity, they are left to the power of their lusts and of the tempter, and sink deeper into darkness, and become more hardened and presumptuous. Those who embark with these distracted pilots in such dangerous seas, have a mind to perish for ever.”\*

(6.) And another is *hypocrisy*.—“Hypocrisy is a spiritual pollution. In its theological consideration it implies a counterfeiting religion and virtue: an affectation of the name joined with a disaffection to the thing: the having a form of godliness, with denying the power of it. 2 Tim. iii, 5. Accordingly, every nominal Christian, who professes subjection to Christ, and lives in habitual disobedience to his commands, is a hypocrite. The actions are the incarnate issues of the heart wherein they are formed, and the clearest discovery of it. A rebellious course of sin declares a person to be an infidel, notwithstanding his owning Christ to be our King. His life is a continual lie: he vainly presumes that God is his Father, when his actions declare him to be a child of the devil. John viii, 41, 44.

“Hypocrisy, in a stricter sense, is, when men presume their spiritual condition to be good, upon false grounds. It is observable, no man is a hypocrite to himself out of choice; he does not deliberately deceive himself: but one may be a hypocrite without his knowledge, by ignorance and error; he may think his inclination to some virtues, and his aversion from some vices, to be divine grace: but sympathies and antipa-

\* Spiritual Perfection, p. 78.

thies proceed often from natural temper, and not from the renewed mind and will, from judgment and choice. A tame dog is as truly a beast as a wild wolf. A man that performs only some good things, and abstains from some evil, from natural conscience, is as truly in a state of polluted nature, as one that is wholly careless of his duty, and freely indulges every carnal lust. One may be exact in light matters, as the Pharisees in tithing mint and cummin, and neglect substantial duties ; he may be zealous in the outward parts of religious worship, and neglect righteousness and mercy, and think to compensate his defects in the duties of one table, by strictly observing the duties of the other ; this is pernicious hypocrisy. The subtlety and strength of Satan are employed to deceive men by an airy religion, by an opinionative goodness, to prevent their being awakened from their drowsy and deadly state. It is worthy of notice, the tempter has a double operation in the minds of men : he deceives the hypocritical with false hopes, by concealing or extenuating their sins, to induce them to presume of the favour of God, and to secure his quiet possession of them ; and he troubles the sincere with vain terrors by concealing their graces, to discourage their progress in the way to heaven. He is an envious explorer, and searches to find out their defects, to accuse them to God ; and he defames God to them, as if he would not spare his sons that serve him. He is triumphant in the unsanctified, and militant in the saints.

“ Some hide their crying sins under the colourable appearance of virtues ; and pretend to holiness, that they may sin with less suspicion, and more security. Such persons will speak of those sins in others with severity, which they freely indulge. The characters of religion are drawn in their countenance, but their

lusts are deeply engraven in their hearts. These our Saviour compares to painted sepulchres, that within contain sordid dust and rottenness. This is perfect hypocrisy; a deadly pollution, that wounds the vitals, sears the conscience, quenches all goodness in the will; for this hypocrite is voluntarily so. Hypocrisy in the heart is like poison in a spring, that spreads itself through all the veins of the conversation. This sin our Saviour never speaks of but with detestation: for this he denounced such a heavy wo against the Pharisees, that used religion as a masking habit to appear glorious in the eyes of men, and disguised their worldly aims in devotions; and made long prayers to be esteemed of men. Matt. xxiii, 14. This is so odious to God, that he forbids all the emblems and resemblances of it to the Jews,—linsey-woolsey garments, and mixed corn. Lev. xix, 19. Our defects, acknowledged with ingenuousness, excite his compassion; but counterfeit virtues excite his indignation. For what can be more provoking, than to appear to be like God in holiness, the glory of the Deity, for this end, to be secretly wicked, and to affront his omniscience, as if he could not discern them through all their close and dark concealments. A hypocrite is fearful of men, but faces God. Pride mixed with hypocrisy was the devil's original sin; he abode not in the truth, (John viii, 44,) and religious hypocrites are his own children. The hottest climate in hell will be their habitation; for our Saviour threatens to some sinners a portion with hypocrites; that is, aggravated damnation. This sin is difficultly cured, in that it is not easily discovered by men, and does not expose to shame; but is subservient to many carnal ends. Men cannot dive into the hearts of others, and cannot discern between the paint of hypocrisy and the life of holiness. The mixture of



beautiful colours in the countenance may be so artificial, that at a distance it may be thought to be natural. Besides, hypocrisy turns the remedy into poison; for the frequent exercise of religious duty, which is the means to sanctify us, confirms and hardens hypocrites.”\*

(7.) And the last I shall mention is *envy*.—“ Envy at the good of others, and malice wishing them evil, is a deep pollution of the spirit. This absolutely alienates men from the nature and life of God; for the clearest conception we have of the Deity is, that he is good, and does good. This is contrary not only to supernatural grace, but to natural conscience; and turns a man into a fiend. This vice is immediately attended with its punishment. The envious man is his own tormentor, and has the viper’s fate in the fable, that in biting the file, wounded itself. Besides, this stops the descent of divine blessings, and turns the petitions of the envious into imprecations against themselves.”†

The following general remarks are of the same character for pertinency and point with what has gone before:—“ To finish this head, it is observable, nothing more discovers the necessity of renovation, than the defilements of the spirit. As birds by incubation hatch their brood; so from sinful thoughts and desires actual sins proceed. Our Saviour tells us, ‘ Out of the heart proceed murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, which defile a man,’ Matt. xv, 19, 20. It is above all things necessary, to keep the heart; for the issues of death flow from it. The design, contrivance, and consent to sin, are in the heart; the body is only the instrument of sin. To enforce this counsel, there are many motives.

\* Spiritual Perfection, pp. 78–81.

† Ibid., pp. 82, 83.

“(1.) God is infinitely dishonoured and displeased by the sins of our spirits :\* for the soul is of near alliance with God, and of incomparably more value than the vile body : therefore the defiling it is highly provoking. The soul is the place of his special residence ; and the entertaining sin in it, is a fouler indignity than the bringing dung into the presence-chamber of a king. We should be more careful to approve our thoughts and desires to God, than our words and actions to men.

“(2.) They are more easily contracted than those which are acted by the sensitive faculties : they secretly insinuate into the soul. External sins require fit time, and place, and means for their commission ; and are often hindered by the moral restraints of fear and shame : but speculative sins may be committed without convenient circumstances. In whatever place, or company, men are, they may retire into their hearts, and please themselves with vicious thoughts and desires of future sins, and devices how to make provision for the flesh ; with carnal representations and complacency of the sins they have committed. They may personate the pleasures of sin in the scene of fancy ; and the imagination of old sins becomes a new temptation, and deeply stains their minds ; and as it is usual, what pleases is favoured and defended, they by carnal discourse pervert Scripture to countenance their lusts ; which is the highest wickedness.

“(3.) Spiritual sins are most frequently committed, being of quick despatch, without the toil of the body : from hence their number is as the sand upon the seashore. They infinitely increase men’s accounts with the high and eternal Judge ; whose understanding is as searching as it is unsearchable. The judgment of

\* By “sins of our spirits,” and “spiritual sins,” our author means those which come through the imagination, desires, and will.

the last day is distinguished from the process of inferior human courts, which are confined to take cognizance only of men's intentions by overt acts ; for then there shall be a revelation of the thoughts and secrets of the heart.

“(4.) Spiritual sins are more incurable than those that are done by the body ; for when the sensitive faculties by diseases and age are disabled, then the vicious habits of the soul may be strong ; and, like the poison of a serpent, be more deadly by age.

“ Notwithstanding inward pollutions induce such a guilt, yet carnal men are apt to think that till sin be perfected in the gross act, it is not deadly : and for this they pervert Scripture, wherein it is said, ‘ That when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin ; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death,’ James i, 15. But in God’s sight, the contemplative commission of sin renders one as truly guilty as the actual sinner ; and consent to the doing it, renders as obnoxious to his enlightened and impartial tribunal as the performance. His pure and perfect law, the rule of our duty, forbids all defilements fleshly and spiritual, and that shall be the rule of our judgment. And as the soul is the first and principal agent in sin, it shall first receive the recompense of it. In the interval between death and the resurrection, while the body is without sense in the grave, the soul is tormented in hell.”\*

St. Paul groups together a large family of these evils, under the designation of “ works of the flesh.” These are, “ Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like ;” and says : “ Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they

\* Spiritual Perfection, pp. 83-85.

which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Gal. v, 19-21.

I have considered the body of sin, with its members, unsubdued and unbridled, as it is in the minds of the unregenerate: originating in the senses, conceptions, and imagination; nourished by the desires, and matured through the instrumentality of the will. And the apostle presents them as completed in the lives and conduct of wicked men. But in the regenerate this "body of the sins of the flesh," and these evil "desires of the heart and the mind," are "*nailed to the cross.*" The old man is subjected, and grace is in the ascendant.

But though the corruptions of the heart are subjected, and are undergoing the process of mortification, they still occasionally stir—there are remains of them which must be exterminated. Though crucified, they are not yet entirely dead. But their complete destruction is provided for by the atonement and mediation of Christ, and it remains for the regenerate to make the application of the remedy. In this sense I understand Rom. vi, 11: "Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin,"—*νεκροὺς μὲν εἶναι*, *truly, or in truth dead.* "*Μὲν, indeed,* a conjunction, plainly derived, I think, from the Hebrew אָמֵן *amen*, denoting truth."\*

2. I hasten now to the consideration of the latter branch of the great work of sanctification. That is, *the life of God in the soul.*

When the apostle exhorts us to reckon ourselves "dead indeed unto sin," he immediately adds, "but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vi, 11. And when he requires us to cleanse ourselves "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," he continues, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii, 1. And after giving a catalogue of "the works of the

\* Parkhurst.

flesh" which are to be eradicated, he immediately proceeds to give us a list of the opposite graces which are to be cultivated. "The fruit of the Spirit," says he, 'is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Gal. v, 19-24. "For," says he, "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," Ephes. ii, 10. And we are required to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," chap. iv, 24; and "which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him," Col. iii, 10.

From these passages we may gather the following essential elements of the life of grace:—*knowledge, purity, and love.*

(1.) We must be "renewed in knowledge after the image of God." This implies the right direction and quickening of the intellectual faculties. The understanding being illuminated, it is prepared to discern moral distinctions, and to appreciate moral beauty. It is directed to the perfections of the Deity, and gazes upon the beauty of holiness. It sees the character and bearings of the great moral rule, and clearly distinguishes between the impulses of the flesh and the monitions of the Spirit. It apprehends the atonement of Christ, and through this medium sees the way to be reconciled to the Father of mercies. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent," John xvii, 3.

The complete sanctification of the intellect will correct all its moral aberrations. It will purify and regulate the thoughts, the conceptions, the imagination,



the memory, and the judgment. The Psalmist felt a deep concern that his "thoughts" might be properly directed and regulated. Says he, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts," Psa. cxxxix, 23. And a most excellent formula is directed to the same point in these words: "Cleanse *the thoughts* of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name."

(2.) We must be renewed in "holiness." The most general sense of the term "holiness" is separation from the world, and in this sense it implies both inward and outward religion. But in connection with the term "righteousness" I understand it to imply *purity of heart—the mind that was in Christ Jesus*. It consequently constitutes the root or foundation of all the active Christian graces. It implies not only freedom from sin, but dedication to God. And when it is entire, then do we *perfect holiness* in the fear of God. Without any measure of this heaven-born principle the heart is full of filthiness; and with its complete reign, and universal diffusion through the soul, the seeds of grace spring up into a luxuriant growth, and bear the fruits of righteousness, to the praise and glory of God.

(3.) We must be renewed in "righteousness." Righteousness implies the conformity of the motions of the heart and the actions of the life to the will of God. The highest evangelical sense of the term implies loving God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. St. Paul says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. xiii, 10; *πληρωμα νομου*, a *full performance of the law*. And St. John speaks of "perfect love," 1 John iv, 17, 18;—a love that is without alloy—and that is complete—filling the whole soul, bringing all the thoughts and affections "into

captivity to the obedience of Christ." Love is the sum of the evangelical law; and when, in the language of St. John, it is "made perfect," all the sensibilities of the soul are restored to their appropriate objects, and the voluntary power is conformed to the will of God, or, in other words, the affections and the will are fully sanctified.

And who will say that any thing short of the entire man—the intellect, the sensibilities, the will, and the senses—is intended by the apostle in that comprehensive prayer, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thess. v, 23. Indeed, this seems to cover the whole ground. The whole man—all the powers of his soul, and all the functions of his body—are embraced. All these may be sanctified—sanctified wholly—and "preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." And to give the fullest assurance of this high privilege, the apostle adds, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it," verse 24.

Having exhausted so much time upon the Scripture sense of entire sanctification, I must waive the views which have been presented by theologians until another occasion. I shall now conclude with a brief *improvement*.

1. I would ask those who have experienced justifying grace, but still feel the remains of the carnal mind, whether the entire sanctification of which I have been speaking does not appear necessary to the high ends of Christianity? Can we, dear brethren, feel the sediment of our inward corruptions stirred even by slight circumstances of temptation, and not feel that we need to be entirely cleansed from inward sin?

Is it not a source of heartfelt grief, that the hateful passions of lust, anger, pride, covetousness, jealousy, &c., are often detected in our heart? Do these roots of bitterness spring up and trouble us, and yet are we satisfied with our state? How should these things bring us into the dust; and with what earnestness should we groan to be delivered! We have doubtless often felt these enemies of the Lord, and of our own peace, as thorns in our sides and as pricks in our eyes. We have compelled them, for the time, to give the ground; we have prayed, resolved, and re-resolved, and yet we have too much evidence that "the Canaanite" still remains "in the land." We have prayed with the Psalmist, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," and yet, alas! is not our condition but too accurately described by the poet—

"With outstretch'd hands and streaming eyes,  
Oft I begin to grasp the prize;  
I groan, I strive, I watch, I pray,  
But O! how soon it dies away!  
The deadly slumber still I feel,  
Afresh upon my spirit steal!"

2. Does not this complete renewing appear desirable? Can we glorify God in any way so fully as by a full conformity of heart and life to his holy will? Is any thing so beautiful, so glorious in the whole universe, as complete holiness? What so fully promotive of our own happiness, as entire conformity to the image of God? O, why should we not "serve the Lord in the beauty of holiness?" Why not "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks?" How beggarly is all the glory of this world in comparison with the "pearl of perfect love!" How insipid the pleasures of sense, in comparison with "joy and

peace in believing!" How utterly worthless all the honours of the world, in comparison with the peculiar honours of the "saints" or *holy ones* in whom the Lord "delighteth!" Here are riches, and honours, and pleasures, pure as the source whence they emanate, glorious as heaven, and lasting as eternity!

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### LECTURE III.

#### THEORIES ON THE DOCTRINE OF PERFECTION—WESLEYAN THEORY.

"Let us go on unto perfection," Hebrews vi, 1.

HAVING, in the preceding lecture, deduced the doctrine of entire sanctification, or Christian perfection, from the Scriptures, I shall next proceed to present the leading theories which have been maintained upon the subject by Christian divines.

And I shall begin with what, for distinction's sake, I shall denominate the Wesleyan theory of evangelical perfection.

This theory simply asserts *the attainableness, in the present life, of a state of holiness truly denominated* CHRISTIAN PERFECTION. This Christian perfection implies *loving God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength—a perfect fulfilment of the terms of salvation.* These terms being based upon the covenant of grace, do not imply a perfect compliance with the requisitions of the covenant of works. In relation to the latter it is truly said, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves."

The following are the views of our standard writers upon the subject. I begin with Mr. Wesley :—

“ On Monday, June 25, 1744, our first conference began; six clergymen and all our preachers being present. The next morning we seriously considered the doctrine of sanctification, or perfection. The questions asked concerning it, and the substance of the answers given, were as follows :—

“ ‘ QUESTION. What is it to be sanctified ?

“ ‘ ANSWER. To be renewed in the image of God, “in righteousness and true holiness.”

“ ‘ Q. What is implied in being a perfect Christian ?

“ ‘ A. The loving God with all our heart, and mind, and soul. Deut. vi, 5.

“ ‘ Q. Does this imply, that all inward sin is taken away ?

“ ‘ A. Undoubtedly ; or how can we be said to be “saved from all our uncleannesses ?” Ezek. xxxvi, 29.’

“ Our second conference began Aug. 1, 1745. The next morning we spoke of sanctification as follows :—

“ ‘ Q. When does inward sanctification begin ?

“ ‘ A. In the moment a man is justified. (Yet sin remains in him, yea, the seed of all sin, till he is sanctified throughout.) From that time a believer gradually dies to sin, and grows in grace.

“ ‘ Q. Is this ordinarily given till a little before death ?

“ ‘ A. It is not, to those who expect it no sooner.

“ ‘ Q. But may we expect it sooner ?

“ ‘ A. Why not ? For, although we grant, (1.) That the generality of believers, whom we have hitherto known, were not so sanctified till near death ; (2.) That few of those to whom St. Paul wrote his epistles were so at that time ; nor, (3.) He himself at the time of writing his former epistles ; yet all this does not prove that we may not be so to-day.



“ ‘Q. In what manner should we preach sanctification?

“ ‘A. Scarce at all to those who are not pressing forward; to those who are, always by way of promise; always drawing, rather than driving.’

“ Our third conference began Tuesday, May 26, 1746. In this we carefully read over the minutes of the two preceding conferences, to observe whether any thing contained therein might be retrenched or altered on more mature consideration. But we did not see cause to alter in any respect what we had agreed upon before.

“ Our fourth conference began on Tuesday, June 16, 1747. As several persons were present who did not believe the doctrine of perfection, we agreed to examine it from the foundation.

“ In order to this it was asked,

“ ‘How much is allowed by our brethren who differ from us with regard to entire sanctification?

“ ‘A. They grant, (1.) That every one must be entirely sanctified in the article of death. (2.) That till then a believer daily grows in grace, comes nearer and nearer to perfection. (3.) That we ought to be continually pressing after it, and to exhort all others so to do.

“ ‘Q. What do we allow them?

“ ‘A. We grant, (1.) That many of those who have died in the faith, yea, the greater part of those we have known, were not perfected in love, till a little before their death. (2.) That the term *sanctified* is continually applied by St. Paul to all that were justified. (3.) That by this term alone he rarely, if ever, means, “saved from all sin.” (4.) That, consequently, it is not proper to use it in that sense, without adding the word *wholly, entirely*, or the like. (5.) That the in-

spired writers almost continually speak of or to those who were justified, but very rarely of or to those who were wholly sanctified.\* (6.) That, consequently, it behooves us to speak almost continually of the state of justification; but more rarely,† at least in full and explicit terms, concerning entire sanctification.

“ ‘Q. What, then, is the point where we divide?

“ ‘A. It is this: should we expect to be saved from all sin before the article of death?’ ”‡

Again:—

“ ‘QUEST. What is Christian perfection?

“ ‘ANS. The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love.

“ ‘Q. Do you affirm that this perfection excludes all infirmities, ignorance, and mistake?

“ ‘A. I continually affirm quite the contrary, and always have done so.

“ ‘Q. But how can every thought, word, and work, be governed by pure love, and the man be subject at the same time to ignorance and mistake?

“ ‘A. I see no contradiction here: “A man may be filled with pure love, and still be liable to mistake.” Indeed, I do not expect to be freed from actual mistakes till this mortal puts on immortality. I believe this to be a natural consequence of the soul’s dwelling in flesh and blood. For we cannot now think at all, but by the mediation of those bodily organs which have

\* “That is, unto those alone, exclusive of others; but they speak to them, jointly with others, almost continually.”

† “More rarely, I allow; but yet in some places very frequently, strongly, and explicitly.”

‡ Plain Account of Christian Perfection, pp. 48–51.

suffered equally with the rest of our frame. And hence we cannot avoid sometimes thinking wrong, till this corruptible shall have put on incorruption.

“ ‘But we may carry this thought further yet. A mistake in judgment may possibly occasion a mistake in practice. For instance: Mr. De Renty’s mistake touching the nature of mortification, arising from prejudice of education, occasioned that practical mistake, his wearing an iron girdle. And a thousand such instances there may be, even in those who are in the highest state of grace. Yet, where every word and action springs from love, such a mistake is not properly a sin. However, it cannot bear the rigour of God’s justice, but needs the atoning blood.

“ ‘Q. What was the judgment of all our brethren who met at Bristol in August, 1758, on this head?

“ ‘A. It was expressed in these words: (1.) Every one may mistake as long as he lives. (2.) A mistake in opinion may occasion a mistake in practice. (3.) Every such mistake is a transgression of the perfect law. Therefore, (4.) Every such mistake, were it not for the blood of atonement, would expose to eternal damnation. (5.) It follows, that the most perfect have continual need of the merits of Christ, even for their actual transgressions, and may say for themselves, as well as for their brethren, “Forgive us our trespasses.”

“ ‘This easily accounts for what might otherwise seem to be utterly unaccountable; namely, that those who are not offended when we speak of the highest degree of love, yet will not hear of living without sin. The reason is, they know all men are liable to mistake, and that in practice as well as in judgment. But they do not know, or do not observe, that this is not sin, if love is the sole principle of action.

“ ‘Q. But still, if they live without sin, does not

this exclude the necessity of a mediator? At least, is it not plain that they stand no longer in need of Christ in his priestly office?

“ ‘A. Far from it. None feel their need of Christ like these; none so entirely depend upon him. For Christ does not give life to the soul separate from, but in and with himself. Hence his words are equally true of all men, in whatsoever state of grace they are: “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me: Without” (or separate from) “me ye can do nothing.”

“ ‘In every state we need Christ in the following respects:—(1.) Whatever grace we receive, it is a free gift from him. (2.) We receive it as his purchase, merely in consideration of the price he paid. (3.) We have this grace, not only from Christ, but in him. For our perfection is not like that of a tree, which flourishes by the sap derived from its own root, but, as was said before, like that of a branch which, united to the vine, bears fruit; but, severed from it, is dried up and withered. (4.) All our blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, depend on his intercession for us, which is one branch of his priestly office, whereof therefore we have always equal need. (5.) The best of men still need Christ in his priestly office to atone for their omissions, their shortcomings, (as some not improperly speak,) their mistakes in judgment and practice, and their defects of various kinds. For these are all deviations from the perfect law, and consequently need an atonement. Yet that they are not properly sins, we apprehend may appear from the words of St. Paul: “He that loveth, hath fulfilled the law; for love is the fulfilling of the law,” Rom. xiii, 10. Now, mistakes, and whatever infirmities necessarily flow from the cor-

ruptible state of the body, are no way contrary to love ; nor, therefore, in the Scripture sense, sin.

“ ‘To explain myself a little further on this head : (1.) Not only sin, properly so called, (that is, a voluntary transgression of a known law,) but sin, improperly so called, (that is, an involuntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown,) needs the atoning blood. (2.) I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions, which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality. (3.) Therefore *sinless perfection* is a phrase I never use, lest I should seem to contradict myself. (4.) I believe a person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions. (5.) Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please : I do not, for the reasons above mentioned.’ ”\*

And again :—

“ Some thoughts occurred to my mind this morning concerning Christian perfection, and the manner and time of receiving it, which I believe may be useful to set down.

“ 1. By perfection I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God and our neighbour, ruling our tempers, words, and actions.

“ I do not include an impossibility of falling from it, either in part or in whole. Therefore, I retract several expressions in our hymns, which partly express, partly imply, such an impossibility.

“ And I do not contend for the term *sinless*, though I do not object against it.

“ 2. As to the manner. I believe this perfection is always wrought in the soul by a simple act of faith ; consequently in an instant.

\* Plain Account of Christian Perfection, pp. 62-67.



“ But I believe a gradual work, both preceding and following that instant.

“ 3. As to the time. I believe this instant generally is the instant of death, the moment before the soul leaves the body. But I believe it may be ten, twenty, or forty years before.

“ I believe it is usually many years after justification; but that it may be within five years or five months after it, I know no conclusive argument to the contrary.

“ If it must be many years after justification, I would be glad to know how many. *Pretium quotus arroget annus?* [What length of time will sanction it?]

“ And how many days or months, or even years, can any one allow to be between perfection and death? How far from justification must it be; and how near to death?

“ LONDON, Jan. 27, 1767.”\*

Next to Mr. Wesley we reckon Mr. Fletcher. His statement of the doctrine of evangelical perfection is as follows:—

“ We give the name of Christian perfection to that maturity of grace and holiness which established adult believers attain to under the Christian dispensation; and thus we distinguish that maturity of grace both from the ripeness of grace, which belongs to the dispensation of the Jews below us; and from the ripeness of glory which belongs to departed saints above us. Hence it appears, that by Christian perfection we mean nothing but the cluster and maturity of the graces which compose the Christian character in the church militant.

“ In other words, Christian perfection is a spiritual constellation made up of these gracious stars,—perfect

\* Works, vol. vi, pp. 531, 532.

repentance, perfect faith, perfect humility, perfect meekness, perfect self-denial, perfect resignation, perfect hope, perfect charity for our visible enemies, as well as for our earthly relations ; and, above all, perfect love for our invisible God, through the explicit knowledge of our Mediator, Jesus Christ. And as this last star is always accompanied by all the others, as Jupiter is by his satellites ; we frequently use, as St. John, the phrase ‘perfect love,’ instead of the word ‘perfection ;’ understanding by it the pure love of God, shed abroad in the hearts of established believers by the Holy Ghost, which is abundantly given them under the fulness of the Christian dispensation.

“ Should any one ask if the Christian perfection which we contend for is a sinless perfection, we reply, ‘Sin is the transgression of’ a divine ‘law ;’ and man may be considered either as being under the anti-evangelical, Christless, remediless law of our Creator ; or as being under the evangelical, mediatorial, remedying law of our Redeemer : and the question must be answered according to the nature of these two laws.

“ With respect to the first, that is, the Adamic, Christless law of innocence and paradisiacal perfection, we utterly renounce the doctrine of sinless perfection, for three reasons. We are conceived and born in a state of sinful degeneracy, whereby that law is already virtually broken. Our mental and bodily powers are so enfeebled, that we cannot help actually breaking that law in numberless instances, even after our full conversion. And, when once we have broken that law, it considers us as transgressors for ever : nor can it any more pronounce us sinless than the rigorous law which condemns a man to be hanged for murder can absolve a murderer, let his repentance and faith be ever so perfect. Therefore, I repeat it, with respect

to the Christless law of paradisiacal obedience, we entirely disclaim sinless perfection.

“ But Christ has so completely fulfilled our Creator’s paradisiacal law of innocence, which allows neither of repentance nor of renewed obedience, that we shall not be judged by that law ; but by a law adapted to our present state and circumstances,—a milder law, called ‘ the law of Christ ;’ that is, the Mediator’s law, which is, like himself, ‘ full of’ evangelical ‘ grace and truth.’

“ We do not doubt, but as a reasonable, loving father never requires of his child who is only ten years old the work of one who is thirty years of age ; so our heavenly Father never expects of us, in our debilitated state, the obedience of immortal Adam in paradise, or the uninterrupted worship of sleepless angels in heaven. We are persuaded, therefore, that, for Christ’s sake, he is pleased with an humble obedience to our present light, and a loving exertion of our present powers ; accepting our gospel services according to what we have, and not according to what we have not. Nor dare we call that loving exertion of our present power sin ; lest by so doing we should contradict the Scriptures, confound sin and obedience, and remove all the landmarks which divide the devil’s common from the Lord’s vineyard.

“ We exhort the strongest believers to ‘ grow up to Christ in all things ;’ asserting that there is no holiness and no happiness in heaven (much less upon earth) which does not admit of a growth, except the holiness and happiness of God himself ; because, in the very nature of things, a being absolutely perfect, and in every sense infinite, can never have any thing added to him. But infinite additions may be made to beings every way finite, such as glorified saints and holy angels are.

“ Hence, it appears, that the comparison which we

make between the ripeness of a fruit, and the maturity of a believer's grace, cannot be carried into an exact parallel. For a perfect Christian grows far more than a feeble believer, whose growth is still obstructed by the shady thorns of sin, and by the draining suckers of iniquity. Besides, a fruit which is come to its perfection, instead of growing, falls and decays : whereas a 'babe in Christ' is called to grow till he becomes a perfect Christian ; a perfect Christian, till he becomes a disembodied spirit ; a disembodied spirit, till he reaches the perfection of a saint glorified in body and soul ; and such a saint, till he has fathomed the infinite depths of divine perfection, that is, to all eternity. For if we go on 'from faith to faith,' and are spiritually 'changed from glory to glory,' by beholding God 'darkly through a glass' on earth ; much more shall we experience improving changes, when we shall 'see him as he is,' and behold him 'face to face,' in various, numberless, and still brighter discoveries of himself in heaven."\*

The following are Dr. Clarke's views :—"The word 'sanctify' has two meanings. 1. It signifies to consecrate, to separate from earth and common use, and to devote or dedicate to God and his service. 2. It signifies to make holy or pure.

"Many talk much, and indeed well, of what Christ has done for us : but how little is spoken of what he is to do in us ! and yet all that he has done for us is in reference to what he is to do in us. He was incarnated, suffered, died, and rose again from the dead ; ascended to heaven, and there appears in the presence of God for us. These were all saving, atoning, and mediating acts for us ; that he might reconcile us to God ; that he might blot out our sin ; that he might

\* Last Check, pp. 329-332.

purge our consciences from dead works ; that he might bind the strong man armed—take away the armour in which he trusted, wash the polluted heart, destroy every foul and abominable desire, all tormenting and unholy tempers ; that he might make the heart his throne, fill the soul with his light, power, and life ; and, in a word, ‘destroy the works of the devil.’ These are done in us ; without which we cannot be saved unto eternal life. But these acts done in us are consequent on the acts done for us : for had he not been incarnated, suffered, and died in our stead, we could not receive either pardon or holiness ; and did he not cleanse and purify our hearts, we could not enter into the place where all is purity : for the beatific vision is given to them only who are purified from all unrighteousness ; for it is written, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’ Nothing is purified by death ;—nothing in the grave ; nothing in heaven. The living stones of the temple, like those of that at Jerusalem, are hewn, squared, and cut here, in the church militant, to prepare them to enter into the composition of the church triumphant.

“ This perfection is the restoration of man to the state of holiness from which he fell, by creating him anew in Christ Jesus, and restoring to him that image and likeness of God which he has lost. A higher meaning than this it cannot have ; a lower meaning it must not have. God made man in that degree of perfection which was pleasing to his own infinite wisdom and goodness. Sin defaced this divine image ; Jesus came to restore it. Sin must have no triumph ; and the Redeemer of mankind must have his glory. But if man be not perfectly saved from all sin, sin does triumph, and Satan exult, because they have done a mischief that Christ either cannot or will not remove.



To say he cannot, would be shocking blasphemy against the infinite power and dignity of the great Creator ; to say he will not, would be equally such against the infinite benevolence and holiness of his nature. All sin, whether in power, guilt, or defilement, is the work of the devil ; and Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil ; and as all unrighteousness is sin, so his blood cleanseth from all sin, because it cleanseth from all unrighteousness.

“ Many stagger at the term *perfection* in Christianity ; because they think that what is implied in it is inconsistent with a state of probation, and savours of pride and presumption : but we must take good heed how we stagger at any word of God ; and much more how we deny or fritter away the meaning of any of his sayings, lest he reprove us, and we be found liars before him. But it may be that the term is rejected because it is not understood. Let us examine its import.

“ The word ‘ perfection,’ in reference to any person or thing, signifies that such person or thing is complete or finished ; that it has nothing redundant, and is in nothing defective. And hence that observation of a learned civilian is at once both correct and illustrative, namely, ‘ We count those things perfect which want nothing requisite for the end whereto they were instituted.’ And *to be perfect* often signifies ‘ to be blameless, clear, irreproachable ;’ and, according to the above definition of Hooker, a man may be said to be perfect who answers the end for which God made him ; and as God requires every man to love him with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and his neighbour as himself ; then he is a perfect man that does so ; he answers the end for which God made him ; and this is more evident from the nature of that love which fills his heart : for, as love is the principle of obedience, so

he that loves his God with all his powers will obey him with all his powers ; and he who loves his neighbour as himself will not only do no injury to him, but, on the contrary, labour to promote his best interests. Why the doctrine which enjoins such a state of perfection as this should be dreaded, ridiculed, or despised, is a most strange thing ; and the opposition to it can only be from that carnal mind that is enmity to God ; ‘that is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.’ And had I no other proof that man is fallen from God, his opposition to Christian holiness would be to me sufficient.

“The whole design of God was to restore man to his image, and raise him from the ruins of his fall ; in a word, to make him perfect ; to blot out all his sins, purify his soul, and fill him with holiness ; so that no unholy temper, evil desire, or impure affection or passion, shall either lodge, or have any being within him ; this, and this only, is true religion, or Christian perfection ; and a less salvation than this would be dishonourable to the sacrifice of Christ, and the operation of the Holy Ghost ; and would be as unworthy of the appellation of ‘Christianity,’ as it would be of that of ‘holiness or perfection.’ They who ridicule this are scoffers at the word of God ; many of them totally irreligious men, sitting in the seat of the scornful. They who deny it, deny the whole scope and design of divine revelation and the mission of Jesus Christ. And they who preach the opposite doctrine are either speculative Antinomians, or pleaders for Baal.

“When St. Paul says he ‘warns every man, and teaches every man in all wisdom, that he may present every man PERFECT in Christ Jesus,’ he must mean something. What, then, is this *something* ? It must mean ‘that holiness without which none shall see the

Lord.' Call it by what name we please, it must imply the pardon of all transgression, and the removal of the whole body of sin and death; for this must take place before we can be like him, and see him as he is, in the effulgence of his own glory. This fitness, then, to appear before God, and thorough preparation for eternal glory, is what I plead for, pray for, and heartily recommend to all true believers, under the name of *Christian perfection*. Had I a better name, one more energetic, one with a greater plenitude of meaning, one more worthy of the efficacy of the blood that bought our peace, and cleanseth from all unrighteousness, I would gladly adopt and use it. Even the word 'perfection' has, in some relations, so many qualifications and abatements that cannot comport with that full and glorious salvation recommended in the gospel, and bought and sealed by the blood of the cross, that I would gladly lay it by, and employ a word more positive and unequivocal in its meaning, and more worthy of the merit of the infinite atonement of Christ, and of the energy of his almighty Spirit; but there is none in our language; which I deplore as an inconvenience and a loss.\*

The doctrine of "entire SANCTIFICATION, or the perfected HOLINESS of believers," is thus asserted by Mr. Watson:—"That a distinction exists between a regenerate state and a state of entire and perfect holiness, will be generally allowed. Regeneration, we have seen, is concomitant with justification; but the apostles, in addressing the body of believers in the churches to whom they wrote their epistles, set before them, both in the prayers they offer in their behalf, and in the exhortations they administer, a still higher degree of deliverance from sin, as well as a higher growth in

\* Christian Theology, pp. 182-185.

Christian virtues. Two passages only need be quoted to prove this. 1 Thess. v, 23, 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 2 Cor. vii, 1, 'Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' In both these passages deliverance from sin is the subject spoken of; and the prayer in one instance, and the exhortation in the other, goes to the extent of the entire sanctification of 'the soul' and 'spirit,' as well as of the 'flesh' or 'body,' from all sin; by which can only be meant our complete deliverance from all spiritual pollution, all inward depravation of the heart, as well as that which, expressing itself outwardly by the indulgence of the senses, is called 'filthiness of the flesh.' ”\*

The following are Mr. Treffry's views:—"Christianity being the doctrine of Christ, we infer that Christian perfection implies a conformity to the will of Christ, in all that relates to inward and outward holiness, to the temper of our minds, and the conduct of our lives: or, in other words, it is the full maturity of the Christian principle, and the consistent and uniform exemplification of Christian practice. By the Christian principle, we understand that divine virtue, from which the several graces and fruits of Christianity spring, and by which they are supported and kept in continual operation. Or, in other words, it is that which resembles the germinating power in vegetation, that unfolds itself in buds, blossoms, and fruits, containing 'within it, as in an embryo state, the rudiments of all true virtue; which, striking deep its roots, though feeble and lowly in its beginnings, silently progressive,

\* Institutes, part ii, chap. xxix.

and almost insensibly maturing, yet will shortly, even in the bleak and churlish temperature of this world, lift up its head and spread abroad its branches, bearing abundant fruits.”\*

Again this author says :—“ Perfection has a twofold character ; there is a perfection of parts, and a perfection of degrees. A thing is perfect in the former sense, when it possesses all the properties or qualities which are essential to its nature, without any deficiency, or redundancy ; thus a machine is perfect, when it has all its parts, and these parts so admirably disposed as completely to answer the purpose for which it is formed. Thus a human body is perfect, when it has all the limbs, muscles, arteries, veins, &c., that belong to a human body ; and thus I conceive every Christian believer is perfect, as he is endowed with all the graces of the Spirit, and the ‘ fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.’ And this kind of perfection admits of no increase ; any addition would deface the beauty and destroy the harmony of the whole : add another wheel to your watches, and the purpose would be defeated for which they are formed ; imagine another limb joined to a human body, and it would disfigure, rather than beautify it, and retard, rather than accelerate its motion. In religion, indeed, the imagination cannot picture any additional virtue, nor the mind conceive of any new grace to be joined to the Christian character ; the feeblest saint is as perfect in this sense as the most established Christian, and the babe as complete as the man. And I greatly question whether the glorified spirits in heaven are more perfect in this view than the saints upon earth ; for if old things pass away, and all things become new, when the soul is vitally united to Christ, may we not

\* Treatise on Christian Perfection, pp. 11, 12.



suppose that the most consummate state of blessedness in the kingdom of God consists in the endless accessions which those graces will receive that adorn the soul in this world.

“Do the spirits of just men made perfect love God with an intense ardour and growing attachment? And is not ‘the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us?’ Do not we ‘love him because he first loved us?’ Do they possess ‘a fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore?’ And do not ‘we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory?’ ‘And return to Zion with singing, and everlasting joy upon our heads?’

“Do they see Christ as he is, and participate his likeness? ‘And do not we behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, till changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord?’

“Do they say with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing?’ And do not ‘we sing and make melody in our hearts unto the Lord?’

“‘Thee they sing with glory crown’d,  
We extol the slaughter’d Lamb;  
Lower if our voices sound,  
Our subject is the same.’

“Far be it from me to assert any thing positively on this subject; it is possible there may be latent powers in the human soul which never can be developed in this world, but which may, in a future state of existence, give birth to new and endless enjoyments; for if this life be only ‘the bud of being,’ what finite mind can conceive the glories that await us, when we blossom with unfading beauty in the garden of Paradise?

“2d. Perfection may be considered in reference to its degrees. I do not like this term, as I am conscious it may be abused, but it is the best I can find to express my meaning; it implies the having all the ‘fruits of the Spirit’ brought to such maturity, as to exclude every opposing principle, and every contrary temper.\* A man may be perfect in the former sense, and imperfect in the latter: just as a child may be perfect in parts, and imperfect in degrees; he may have all the limbs, and so on, of a human being; but not the strength, the vigour, nor the intellectual endowments of a man. And thus a Christian, who has been recently ‘born of God, and just introduced into the glorious liberty of the gospel, may have all the graces of Christianity, and yet these may exist in imperfect degrees: for instance, every Christian possesses a confidence in God, a trust in his promises, and a reliance upon his veracity; not the confidence of ignorance, nor of presumption, but the genuine offspring of experimental knowledge; for ‘they that know thy name,’ saith David, ‘will put their trust in thee.’ But this confidence, though perfect in its principle, is imperfect in its degree; it is sometimes disturbed by doubts, molested by fears, or harassed by anxious cares; but when the soul has attained to maturity in Christian holiness, this confidence is perfect, and doubt, distrust, and fear, cease to exist. And though in reference to worldly things the Christian may walk ‘in darkness, and have no light;’ the fig-tree may not blossom, nor fruit be in the vine; friends may desert him, and foes meditate his ruin; yet ‘he shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord;’ hence he can say, with Job, ‘though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;’ or with the poet,

\* Instead of *perfection of degrees*, I would prefer as less liable to be misunderstood, *perfection of character*.

“ ‘ Though waves and storms go o’er my head,  
 Though health, and strength, and friends be gone ;  
 Though joys be wither’d all, and dead ;  
 Though every comfort be withdrawn ;  
 On this my steadfast soul relies,  
 Father, thy mercy never dies.’ ”

“ Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ loves God, and gives the most indubitable evidence of that love, by keeping God’s commandments, and doing the things that please him. But this love, although perfect in its nature, is not in its degree ; there may be an undue attachment to the world, an improper fondness for the creature, or an inordinate degree of self-love ; but when the Christian has gone on ‘ unto perfection,’ then he ‘ loves God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength, and his neighbour as himself.’ This love knows no rival ; neither the seductions of sin, nor the lures of the world, nor the charms of the creature, can alienate the affections from the sole object that has engrossed them ; for such a man, wealth has no value, pleasure no attraction, honour no brilliance, and dignities no splendour : hence he adopts the language of the poet,

“ ‘ All my treasure is above,  
 All my riches is thy love ;  
 Whom have I in heaven but thee ?  
 Thou art all in all to me.’ ”\*

I shall close my quotations of Wesleyan authorities, with a statement of the doctrine, by the venerable Bishop Hedding :†

“ Brethren,—Among many other important ques-

\* Sermon on Heb. vi, 1.

† This brief exposition of the doctrine of Christian perfection was delivered, by request, in an address to the candidates for orders in the New-Jersey Conference, April, 1841, and subsequently published in the *Christian Advocate and Journal* in accordance with a vote of the conference.

tions, the following have been asked you, and you have answered them in the affirmative:—‘Are you going on to perfection? Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life? Are you groaning after it?’

“It is important for you, as Christians, and as ministers, to have a thorough understanding of this great subject. The subject is Christian perfection, or being made perfect in love in this life. It is being delivered from sin, and filled with the love of God. The brethren ask me to state ‘the nature of justification, regeneration, and sanctification, and the difference between them as distinct works of grace.’ I understand justification to be a pardon of past sins; and regeneration, which takes place at the same time, to be a change of heart, or of our moral nature. Regeneration also, being the same as the new birth, is the beginning of sanctification, though not the completion of it, or not entire sanctification. Regeneration is the beginning of purification; entire sanctification is the finishing of that work.

“The difference between a justified soul who is not fully sanctified, and one fully sanctified, I understand to be this:—

“The first (if he does not backslide) is kept from voluntarily committing known sin; which is what is commonly meant in the New Testament by *committing sin*. But he yet finds in himself the remains of inbred corruption, or original sin; such as pride, anger, envy, a feeling of hatred to an enemy, a rejoicing at a calamity which has fallen upon an enemy, &c.

“Now, in all this the regenerate soul does not act voluntarily, his choice is against all these evils; God has given him a new heart, which hates all these evils, and resists, and overcomes them, as soon as the mind perceives them. The regenerate soul wishes these

evils were not in his heart, yet he has in himself no power to destroy them. Though the Christian does not feel guilty for this depravity as he would do if he had voluntarily broken the law of God, yet he is often grieved and afflicted, and reproved at a sight of this sinfulness of his nature.

“Though the soul in this state enjoys a degree of religion, yet it is conscious it is not what it ought to be, nor what it must be to be fit for heaven.

“It seems that the sinfulness of our nature, or original sin, may remain in the new-born soul independent of choice, and even against choice.

“The second, or the person fully sanctified, is cleansed from all these inward involuntary sins.

“He may be tempted by Satan, by men, and by his own bodily appetites, to commit sin, but his heart is free from these inward fires, which before his full sanctification were ready to fall in with temptation, and lead him into transgression. He may be tempted to be proud, to love the world, to be revengeful or angry, to hate an enemy, to wish him evil, or to rejoice at his calamity, but he feels none of these passions in his heart; the Holy Ghost has cleansed him from all these pollutions of his nature. Thus it is that, being emptied of sin, the perfect Christian is filled with the love of God, even with that perfect love which casteth out fear.

“But is this sanctification instantaneous or gradual? It is both. In some respects it is one, and in other respects it is the other. In a soul who does not backslide, the work of sanctification goes on gradually till it is finished, and that event is instantaneous. Finishing the work is accomplished in an instant. Mr. Wesley says something like this: ‘A man may be some time dying, but there is an instant in which he dies.’



So in a Christian, sin may be some time dying, but there is an instant in which it dies; and that event is full sanctification. In some, the fact of its being finished in an instant is more apparent to the subject than it is in others.

“But how is this great work performed? By the Holy Spirit—no other power can effect it; and this work of the Spirit is obtained only through the atonement, and through faith in that atonement. That faith which is the condition of this entire sanctification is exercised only by a penitent heart—a heart willing to part with all sin for ever, and determined to do the will of God in all things. Believe and pray for it—it is as important that you should experience this holy work as it is that the sinners to whom you preach should be converted. God is as able, willing, and ready to do this great work for you as he was to pardon your sins. Christ is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through him. But what would be the fate of a soul born of the Spirit, but not fully sanctified, called to die in that state? If he have not backslidden he would go to heaven. Not that he is now fit for heaven, but Christ would fit him should he call him out of the world. Before his departure Christ would either accept his weak faith, or give him a degree of faith equal to his wants, and thus save his soul. This view is supported by the numerous promises in Scripture of eternal salvation to all who die the children of God. Those promises to such as persevere and remain the children of God, include all the work of grace necessary to fit them for heaven. But these views furnish no excuse for us to neglect seeking full sanctification now. If we were sure we should live twenty years, then experience full sanctification and die, there would be many and important reasons for us

to seek that great blessing now, and so to believe as to experience it this day. With it we should be more happy, and more useful; and as we are changeable creatures, with this blessing we shall be more safe than we could be without it. But can a person possessing perfect love, perfectly keep God's holy law, as angels do in heaven? No; if he could, he would no longer need the atonement, any more than holy angels do. Yet through the atonement, he may acceptably keep the law.

“He loves God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself; he acts in all things under the influence of that love; and this is the end of the commandment, and the fulfilling of the law. And though this soul is free from what the Bible calls sin, yet he has infirmities and unavoidable failings growing out of the original fall, on account of which he ought to say,

‘Every moment, Lord, I need  
The merits of thy death;’

forgive me my trespasses, &c. Unavoidable mistakes and failings are covered by the atonement; and through it his obedience is accepted.”

I have been the more diffuse in my references, for the purpose of presenting all the phases of the subject as it is maintained by our standard writers. A clear statement of the doctrine of Christian perfection, I have long felt, is absolutely necessary at the outset; for without this we meet objections at every step which embarrass us, and involve in obscurity and doubt its plainest points. I have therefore selected those passages from the writings of Mr. Wesley, Mr. Fletcher, and succeeding writers, which partake specifically of the nature of definitions, and especially such as give definitions which were rendered necessary by objections founded upon a false issue. After occupying 66

much time in drawing out the true Wesleyan theory, little more should be said in the present lecture. I shall close by a consecutive statement of the propositions which are couched under the language of my authorities.

1. As to the nature of Christian perfection, it is clear, *first*, that our authors neither hold that it implies perfection in knowledge, nor a perfect fulfilment of the requirements of the Adamic law, that is, legal perfection. But, *secondly*, that it implies simply *loving God with all the heart*.

2. That *entire sanctification* and Christian perfection are identical.

3. That a state of sanctification, simply, as that state is referred to in the sacred writers, seldom implies all that we mean by Christian perfection; but when we design, by the term sanctification, to express the state of perfection contended for, we should qualify it by the word *entire*, or the like.

4. That the term perfection, signifying the completeness of a thing in the attributes of its kind, considering its circumstances and the purposes of its being, admits of various degrees. Consequently perfection varies in its character according to the character of its subject; and may vary in its degrees, in subjects of the same class, according to the circumstances of the subject, and its particular destination.

5. That by being saved from all sin in the present life, we mean being saved, *first*, from all outward sin—all violations of the requirements of the law of love which relate to our outward conduct: and, *secondly*, from all inward sin—all violations of the law of love which relate to the intellect, the sensibilities, and the will.

## LECTURE IV.

## THEORIES—VARIOUSLY MODIFIED.

“We speak wisdom among them that are perfect,” 1 Cor. ii, 6.

HAVING, in the preceding lecture, presented the Wesleyan theory of perfection, I shall now proceed to give the views of leading theologians upon the subject in different periods of the church’s history, with such remarks and explanations as may be called for. And in the course of this investigation it will appear that the doctrine of *evangelical perfection* did not originate with Mr. Wesley. I do not say that the Wesleyan theory, in all its parts, is found in the productions of preceding writers. But I may say that the great elements of the system have been developed, even from the early ages, in the same proportion in which vital Christianity has obtained. And hence these elements can be culled from the writings of the best divines of all ages since that of the apostles.

In the selections I have made, I have not been careful always to find the word *perfection*—the *thing* is what I am after. And I find what I mean by Christian perfection often showing itself in the works of divines who condemn the name. I shall, *first*, present the views of several who do not seem to differ in their leading principles from those of our standards; only not having treated the subject controversially, or not having adjusted it to other theological questions which have at different periods agitated the church, they have not set forth their views so much in detail. I begin with the apostolic fathers.

“He that hath the love that is in Christ, let him keep the commandments of Christ. Who can declare the bond of the love of God? Who is sufficient worthily to express the magnificence of its beauty? The height to which love exalts us cannot be spoken. Love unites us to God. Love covereth a multitude of sins. Love is long-suffering; yea, beareth all things. There is nothing mean in love, there is nothing haughty. Love has no schism, is not seditious. Love does all things in unity. By love were all the elect of God made perfect. Without love, nothing is acceptable to God. Ye see, beloved, how great and wonderful a thing love is, and that no words can declare its perfection. Who, then, is sufficient to be found therein? who but they to whom God vouchsafes to teach it? Let us, therefore, beseech him that we may be worthy thereof, that we may live in love, unblameable, without respect of persons. All the generations from Adam unto this day are passed away: but those who were made perfect in love are in the region of the just, and shall appear in glory at the visitation of the kingdom of Christ.”—*St. Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians.*

“Nothing is better than peace, whereby all war is destroyed, both of things in heaven and things on earth. Nothing of this is hid from you, if ye have perfect faith in Jesus Christ, and love, which are the beginning and the end of life: faith is the beginning, love the end; and both being joined in one, are of God. All other things pertaining to perfect holiness follow. For no man that hath faith sinneth; and none that hath love hateth any man.”—*St. Ignatius's Epistle to the Ephesians.*

Irenæus, a celebrated father of the second century, says:—“The apostle, explaining himself in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, chap. v, exhibited the



perfect and spiritual salvation of man, saying, ‘But the God of peace sanctify you perfectly; that your soul, body, and spirit may be preserved without fault to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.’ How then, indeed, did he have the cause in these three, (that is, to pray for the entire and perfect preservation of soul, body, and spirit, to the coming of the Lord,) unless he knew the common salvation of *these* was the renovation of the whole three? Wherefore he calls those *perfect* who present the three faultless to the Lord. Therefore those are *perfect* who have the spirit and perseverance of God, and have preserved their souls and bodies without fault.”\*

And Clemens Alexandrinus, of the latter part of the second century and the beginning of the third, says:—“I find that the term ‘perfect’ is understood in various senses, as the individual acts rightly in each kind of virtue.”†

But of all the fathers, Macarius, the Egyptian, writes most specifically and consistently upon the subject. He, in his Homilies, treats the subject of set purpose.‡ He says:—“One that is rich in grace, at all times, by night and by day, continues in a perfect state, free and pure, ever captivated with love, and elevated to God.”—“In like manner Christians, though outwardly they are tempted; yet inwardly are they filled with the divine nature, and so nothing injured. These degrees, if any man attain to, he is come to the perfect love of Christ, and to the fulness of the Godhead.”

\* Lib. v.

† Stormatum, book iv.

‡ MACARIUS was a member of the council of Nice in 325. He was a celebrated hermit, and said to be a disciple of St. Anthony; was born of poor parents in 301. He passed sixty years in a monastery on mount Sceta, and died about the year 391. His Homilies were printed at Paris in 1526, folio, and at Leipsic, 1698.—*Gorton’s Biog. Dict.*

“As iron, or lead, or gold, or silver, when cast into the fire, is freed from that hard consistency which is natural to it, being changed into softness, and, so long as it continues in the fire, is still dissolved from its native hardness : after the same manner the soul that has renounced the world, and fixed its desires only upon the Lord, and hath received that heavenly fire of the Godhead, and of the love of the Spirit, is disentangled from all love of the world, and set free from all the corruption of the affections ; it turns all things out of itself, and is changed from the hardness of sin, and melted down in a fervent and unspeakable love for that heavenly Bridegroom alone, whom it has received. For when the soul is thoroughly cleansed from all its corrupt affections, and is united by an ineffable communion to the Spirit, the Comforter, and is thoroughly mixed with the Spirit, and is become spirit itself ; then it is all light, all eye, all spirit, all joy, all rest, all gladness, all love, all bowels, all goodness and clemency. As a stone in the bottom of the sea is everywhere surrounded by water, so are these everywhere drenched with the Holy Spirit, and made like unto Christ himself, possessing unalterably within themselves the virtues of the power of the Spirit ; being blameless within and without, and spotless, and pure ; for being brought to perfection by the Spirit, how is it possible that they should outwardly produce the fruits of sin ? Sin is rooted out by the coming of the Holy Spirit, and man receives the original formation of Adam in his purity. Through the power of the Spirit, he comes up to the first Adam ; yea, is made greater than him.”

“What, then, is that ‘perfect will of God’ to which the apostle calls and exhorts every one of us to attain ? It is perfect purity from sin, freedom from all shameful passions, and the assumption of perfect virtue ; that is,

the purification of the heart by the plenary and experimental communion of the perfect and divine Spirit. To those who say that it is impossible to attain to perfection, and the final and complete subjugation of the passions, or to acquire a full participation of the good Spirit, we must oppose the testimony of the divine Scriptures; and prove to them that they are ignorant, and speak both falsely and presumptuously.”\*

These extracts may be considered as fair specimens of the opinions propagated by the orthodox fathers until the controversy arose between Pelagius and Augustine. This controversy, as it involved the subject of perfection, will be noticed hereafter.

I shall next present the views of several learned and pious divines of modern times, the first of whom lived just before the period of the Reformation.

*Wickliffe* says :—“To be turned from the world, is to set at naught, and to put out of mind, all likings, joys, and mirths thereof, and to suffer meekly all bitterness, slanders, and troubles thereof, for the love of Christ; and to leave all occupations unlawful and unprofitable to the soul, so that man’s will and thought be dead to seek any thing that the world seeketh and loveth. Therefore the prophet speaketh in the person of the soul’s perfectly turning to God, saying, Mine eyes, that is, my thought and intent, shall ever be to God. For he shall draw my feet, that is, my soul and my affections, out of the snare, and the net of the love of this world. He that is truly turned to God, fleeth from vices, beholdeth not the solaces or comforts of this world; but setteth his mind so steadfastly on God, that he well nigh forgetteth all outward things; he

\* We have a portion of the Homilies of Macarius in Wesley’s Christian Library, vol. xviii.

gathereth himself all within; he is reared up wholly into Christ.”\*

ERASMUS, on Matt. v, 8, says :—“ How much more blessed be they who, being delivered from blindness of the mynde, have the gift inwardly to see God. As the sunne is to cleare eyes, so is God to pure and cleane mindes. As matter of skumme or a webbe is to the eyes, so is God to pure and clean myndes. Therefore blessed be they, whose heart is pure and clean from all filthyness. For they shall have this gift, which is more to be desired than all the pleasures of the world : they shall see God.”†

King Edward VI., who died while yet a youth, was the most pious prince of modern times. In his Primer we have the following prayer “for a pure and clean heart :”—“ The heart of man naturally is corrupt and unsearchable through the multitude of sins, which lie buried in it, insomuch that no man is able to say, My heart is clean, and I am clear from sin. Remove from me, therefore, O heavenly Father, my corrupt, sinful, stony, stubborn, and unfaithful heart. Create in me a clean heart, free from all noisome and ungodly thoughts. Breathe into my heart, by thy Holy Spirit, godly and spiritual motions; that out of the good treasure of the heart I may bring forth good things, unto the praise and glory of thy name. Amen.”‡

A similar prayer, composed by the reformers, is still in use :—“ Cleanse thou the thoughts of my heart

\* Of Perfect Life—Writings of Rev. and learned John Wickliffe : one of the volumes of the English reformers published by the Religious Tract Society.

† Paraphrase. This paraphrase was translated by order of Henry VIII. into English, and ordered to be placed in the churches. My copy is in black letter, and may be the original edition; but this I cannot certainly determine, as the title-page is wanting.

‡ Writings of Edward VI., p. 94.

by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that I may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name.”\*

The learned Cudworth says:—“The end of the gospel is life and perfection; it is a divine nature; it is a godlike frame and disposition of spirit; it is to make us partakers of the image of God in righteousness and true holiness: grace is holiness militant; holiness encumbered with many enemies and difficulties, which it still fights against, and manfully quits itself of: and glory is nothing but holiness triumphant; holiness with a palm of victory in her hand, and a crown upon her head. God himself cannot make me happy, if he be only without me; unless he give a participation of himself and his own likeness unto my soul. I mean by holiness, nothing else but God stamped and printed upon my soul. True holiness is always breathing upward, and fluttering toward heaven, striving to embosom itself with God; and it will at last undoubtedly be conjoined with him; no dismal shades of darkness can possibly stop it in its course. We do but deceive ourselves with names; hell is nothing but the orb of sin and wickedness, or else that hemisphere of darkness in which all evil moves; and heaven is the opposite hemisphere of light, the bright orb of truth, holiness, and goodness: and we actually in this life instate ourselves in the possession of one or other of them. There be some that dishearten us in our spiritual warfare, and would make us let our weapons fall out of our hands, by working in us a despair of victory. There be some evil spies that weaken the hands and hearts of the children of Israel; and bring an ill report upon that land that we are to conquer, telling of nothing but strange giants, the sons of Anak there, that we shall never be able to overcome. The Amalekites, say

\* Communion Service.



they, dwell in the south ; the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, in the mountains ; and the Canaanites by the sea coast ; huge armies of tall invincible lusts : we shall never be able to go against them, we shall never be able to prevail against our corruptions. Hearken not unto them, I beseech you, but hear what Caleb and Joshua say : ‘ Let us go up at once and possess it ; for we are able to overcome them : ’ not by our own strength, but by the power of the Lord of hosts. There are indeed sons of Anak there, there are mighty giant-like lusts, that we are to grapple with ; nay, there are principalities and powers, too, that we are to oppose ; but the great Michael, the Captain of the Lord’s host, is with us ; he commands in chief for us, and we need not be dismayed. ‘ Understand, therefore, this day, that the Lord thy God is he which goeth before thee ; as a consuming fire, he shall destroy these enemies, and bring them down before thy face.’ If thou wilt be faithful to him, and put thy trust in him, ‘ as the fire consumeth the stubble, and as the flame burneth up the chaff,’ so will he destroy thy lusts in thee : ‘ their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as the dust.’ ”\*

Rev. John Arndt thus speaks of the several stages of the Christian life :—“ As there are different stages and degrees of age and maturity in the natural life ; so there are also in the spiritual. It has its first foundation in *sincere repentance*, by which a man sets himself heartily to amend his life. This is succeeded by a *greater illumination*, which is a kind of middle stage. Here, by contemplation, prayer, and bearing the cross, a man is daily improving in grace, and growing up to perfection. The last and most perfect state is that which consists in a most *firm union*, which is founded

\* Cudworth’s Sermon before the House of Commons.

in, and cemented by, *pure love*. This is that state which St. Paul calls, 'the perfect man,' and 'the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,' Eph. iv, 13.

"Behold, *in this mortification consists the true perfection of the Christian life*. Perfection is the denying of our own will; the contempt of the pleasures and profits of this life; the acknowledging our own vileness; constant resignation to the will of God, and unwearied love for our neighbour. In a word, it is that love which thinks of nothing, seeks nothing, desires nothing, but God. I beg the divine grace, both upon thee and me, that it may please him to begin, strengthen, and perfect his good work in us, to the praise and glory of God. Amen!"\*

Dr. Lucas† has left a treatise on *Religious Perfection*, which contains a theory somewhat peculiar, and which is of sufficient importance to have a place here. His statement of it is as follows:—

"Most disputes and controversies arise from false and mistaken notions of the matter under debate: and

\* True Christianity—Wesley's Christian Library, vol. i, pp. 355, 358.

† *Richard Lucas*, D. D., a native of Presteign, Radnorshire; was born 1648, and educated at Jesus College, Oxford, where he graduated. He was for a short time head master of Abergavenny school, but resigned his situation; and coming to the metropolis, obtained, in 1683, the lectureship of St. Olaves, Southwark, and the vicarage of St. Stephen's, Coleman-street, to both which preferments he was elected by the parishioners. His principal writings consist of five octavo volumes of sermons; "An Inquiry after Happiness," two vols. 8vo.; and a Latin translation of the "Whole Duty of Man." His death took place in 1715.—*Gorton*.

The treatise on *Religious Perfection*, which I quote, constitutes the third part of his Inquiry after Happiness; but being perfect in itself, is also published separately. Mr. Wesley has made a large "extract" from the Inquiry in his Christian Library, which makes up the principal part of the twenty-fourth volume of that work.

so I could show it has happened here. Therefore, to prevent mistakes, and cut off all occasions of contention, (which serves only to defeat the influence and success of practical discourses,) I think it necessary to begin here with a plain account *what* it is I mean by religious perfection.

“Religion is nothing else but the purifying and refining nature by grace, the raising and exalting our faculties and capacities by wisdom and virtue. Religious perfection, therefore, is nothing else but the moral accomplishment of human nature; such a maturity of virtue as man in this life is capable of; conversion begins, perfection consummates the habit of righteousness: in the one, religion is, as it were, in its infancy; in the other, in its strength and manhood; so that perfection, in short, is nothing else but a ripe and settled habit of true holiness. According to this notion of religious perfection, he is a perfect man whose mind is pure and vigorous, and his body tame and obsequious; whose faith is firm and steady, his love ardent and exalted, and his hope full of assurance; whose religion has in it that ardour and constancy, and his soul that tranquillity and pleasure, which bespeaks him a child of the light, and of the day, *a partaker of the divine nature, and raised above the corruption which is in the world through lust.*

“This account of religious perfection is so natural and easy, that I fancy no man will demand a proof of it; nor should I go about one, were it not to serve some further ends than the meer confirmation of it. It has manifestly the countenance both of reason and Scripture; and how contradictory soever some ancient and latter schemes of perfection seem to be, or really are, to one another; yet do they all agree in effect in what I have laid down. If we appeal to reason, no

man can doubt, but that an habit of virtue has much more of excellence and merit in it, than single accidental acts, or uncertain fits and passions; since an habit is not only the source and spring of the noblest actions, and the most elevated passions, but it renders us more regular and steady, more uniform and constant in every thing that is good. As to good natural dispositions, they have little of strength, little of perfection in them, till they be raised and improved into habits. And for our natural faculties, they are nothing else but the capacities of good or evil; they are undetermined to the one or other, till they are fixed and influenced by moral principles. It remains, then, that religious perfection must consist in an habit of righteousness. And to prevent all impertinent scruples and cavils, I add a confirmed and well-established one.

“That this is the Scripture notion of perfection, is manifest; first, from the use of this word in Scripture; secondly, from the characters and descriptions of the best and highest state which any ever actually attained, or to which we are invited and exhorted.

“1. From the use of the word. Wherever we find any mention of perfection in Scripture, if we examine the place well, we shall find nothing more intended, than uprightness and integrity, an unblameable and unreprouvable life, a state well advanced in knowledge and virtue. Thus upright and perfect are used as terms equivalent, Job i, ‘And that man was perfect and upright, fearing God and eschewing evil;’ and Psalm xxxvii, 37, ‘Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.’ Thus again, when God exhorts Abraham to perfection, Gen. xvii, 1, ‘I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect;’ all that he exhorts him to is, a steady obedience to all his commandments, proceed-

ing from a lively fear of, and faith in, him ; and this is the general use of this word perfect throughout the Old Testament, namely, to signify a sincere and just man, that feareth God, and escheweth evil, and is well fixed and established in his duty. In the New Testament, perfection signifies the same thing which it does in the Old ; that is, universal righteousness, and strength and growth in it. Thus the perfect man, 2 Tim. iii, 17, is one who is ‘thoroughly furnished to every good work.’ Thus St. Paul tells us, Col. iv, 12, that ‘Epaphras laboured fervently in prayers for the Colossians, that they might stand perfect and compleat in all the will of God.’ In James i, 4, the perfect man is one ‘who is entire, lacking nothing ;’ that is, one who is advanced to a maturity of virtue through patience and experience, and is fortified and established in faith, love, and hope. In this sense of the word perfect, St. Peter prays for those to whom he writes his Epistle, 1 Pet. v, 10 : ‘But the God of all grace, who called us into his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.’ When St. Paul exhorts the Hebrews to go on to perfection, Heb. vi, he means nothing by it, but that state of manhood which consists in a well-settled habit of wisdom and goodness. This is plain, first, from verses 11, 12 of this chapter, where he himself more fully explains his own meaning : ‘And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end ; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promise.’ Next, from the latter end of the fifth chapter ; where we discern what gave occasion to his exhortation. There, distinguishing Christians into two classes, babes and strong men, that is, perfect and imperfect, he describes



both at large thus : ‘ For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God ; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat ; for every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness ; for he is a babe ; but strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.’ And though here the apostle seems more immediately to regard the perfection of knowledge, yet the perfection of righteousness must never, in the language of the Scripture, be separated from it. Much the same remark must I add concerning the integrity of righteousness, and the Christian’s progress or advance in it. Though the Scripture, when it speaks of perfection, do sometimes more directly refer to the one, and sometimes to the other ; yet we must ever suppose that they do mutually imply and include one another ; since otherwise the notion of perfection would be extreamly maimed and incompletion. I’ll insist therefore no longer on the use of the words perfect and perfection in Scripture : but as a further proof that my notion of perfection is truly Scriptural, I will show,

“ 2. That the utmost height to which the Scripture exhorts us is nothing more than a steady habit of holiness ; that the brightest characters it gives of the perfect man, the loveliest descriptions it make us of the perfectest state, are all made up of the natural and confessed properties of a ripe habit. There is no controversy that I know of, about the nature of a habit—every man’s experience instructs him in the whole philosophy of it ; we are all agreed that it is a kind of second nature, that it makes us exert ourselves with desire and earnestness, with satisfaction and pleasure ;

that it renders us fixed in our choice, and constant in our actions, and almost as averse to those things which are repugnant to it, as we are to those which are distasteful and disagreeable to our nature. And that, in a word, it so entirely and absolutely possesses the man, that the power of it is not to be resisted, nor the empire of it to be shaken off; nor can it be removed and extirpated without the greatest labour and difficulty imaginable. All this is a confest and almost palpable truth in habits of sin: and there is no reason why we should not ascribe the same force and efficacy to habits of virtue; especially if we consider that the strength, easiness, and pleasure which belong naturally to these habits, receive no small accession from the supernatural energy and vigour of the Holy Spirit. I will therefore, in few words, show how that state of righteousness which the Scripture invites us to, as our perfection, directly answers this account I have given of an habit.

“Is habit in general a second nature? This state of righteousness is in Scripture called ‘the new man,’ Ephes. iv, 24; ‘the new creature,’ 2 Cor. v, 17; ‘the divine nature,’ 2 Pet. i, 4. Does it consequently rule and govern man? Hear how St. Paul expresses this power of the habit of holiness in himself: Gal. ii, 20, ‘I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.’ This is a constant effect of habits, and is equally discernible in those of vice and virtue, that they sway and govern the man they possess: Rom. vi, 16, ‘Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?’

“Shall I go on to a more distinct and particular con-

sideration of the properties of an habit? The first is, a great aversion for those things which are contrary to it, or obstruct us in the exercise of it. And this is directly the disposition of the perfect man toward temptations and sins; he is now ashamed of those things which before he gloried in; he is filled with an holy indignation against those things which before he took pleasure in; and what before he courted with fondness and passion, he now shuns with fear and vigilance. In brief, the Scripture describes such an one as possessed with an utter hatred and abhorrence of every evil way, and as an irreconcilable enemy to every thing that is an enemy to his virtue and his God. Thus *Psa. cxix, 163*, 'I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love;' and verse 128, 'Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way.' And this is a genuine and natural effect of integrity or uprightness of heart; whence 'tis the observation of our Saviour, *Matt. vi, 24*, 'No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other.' And indeed everywhere a hatred, a perfect hatred of evil, is accounted as a necessary consequence of the love of God: *Psa. xxxvii, 10*, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.' And therefore the Psalmist resolves to practise himself what he prescribes to others: *Psa. ci, 2, 3*, 'I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart: I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me.' And how can this be otherwise? The love of God must necessarily imply an abhorrence of evil; and that habit which confirms and increases the one, must confirm and increase the other too.

“ 3. The next property of an habit is, that the actions which flow from it are (if we meet not with violent opposition) performed with ease and pleasure: what is natural is pleasant and easy, and habit is a second nature. When the love of virtue, and the hatred of vice, have once rooted themselves in the soul, what can be more natural than to follow after the one, and shun the other? Since this is no more than embracing and enjoying what we love, and turning our backs on what we detest. This, therefore, is one constant character of perfection in Scripture: Delight and pleasure are everywhere said to accompany the practice of virtue, when it is once grown up to strength and maturity: ‘The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,’ Prov. iii, 17. ‘Perfect love casteth out fear,’ 1 John iv, 18. And to him that loves, ‘the commandments of God are not grievous,’ 1 John v, 3. Hence it is, that ‘the good man’s delight is in the law of the Lord,’ and that ‘he meditates therein day and night,’ Psal. i, 2. Nor does he delight less in action than meditation, but grows in grace as much as knowledge; and abounds daily more and more in good works, as he increases in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Consonant to this property of perfection it is, that in Psalms xix and cxix, and elsewhere frequently, we hear the Psalmist expressing a kind of inconceivable joy and transport in the meditation and practice of the commands of God. So the first Christians, who spent their lives in devotion, faith, and charity, are said, Acts ii, 46, to have ‘eaten their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.’ And ’tis a delightful description we have of the apostles, 2 Cor. vi, 10, ‘As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things.’

“ 4. Vigour and activity, or much earnestness and

application of mind, is a third property of an habit. 'Tis impossible not to be intent upon those things for which we have even an habitual passion, if this expression may be allowed me; an inclination which has gathered strength and authority from custom will exert itself with some warmth and briskness. Now, certainly there is nothing more frequently required of, or attributed to, the perfect man, in Scripture, than zeal and fervency of spirit in the ways of God: and no wonder; for when actions flow at once from principles and custom; when they spring from love, and are attended by pleasure, and are incited and quickened by faith and hope too; how can it be, but that we should repeat them with some eagerness, and feel an holy impatience as often as we are hindered or disappointed? And as the nature of the thing shows that thus it ought to be, so are there innumerable instances in the Old Testament and the New, which make it evident that thus it was. Shall I mention the example of our Lord, 'who went about doing good?' Acts x, 38. Shall I propose the labours and travels of St. Paul? These patterns, it may be, will be judged by some too bright and dazzling a light for us to look on, or at least too perfect for us to copy after; and yet St. John tells us, that 'he who says he abides in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked,' 1 John ii, 6. And we are exhorted to 'be followers of the apostles, as they were of Christ.' But if the fervency of Christ and St. Paul seemed to have soared out of the reach of our imitation, we have inferior instances enough to prove the zeal and fruitfulness of habitual goodness. Thus David says of himself, Psa. cxix, 10, 'With my whole heart have I sought thee.' And Josiah, 2 Kings xxiii, 25, is said to have 'turned to the Lord with all his soul, and with all his might.' How fervent was



Anna, who ‘departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day!’ Luke ii, 37. How charitable Tabitha, who ‘was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did!’ Acts ix, 36. Where shall I place Cornelius? With what words shall I set out his virtues? With what but those of the Holy Ghost? Acts x, 2, ‘He was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.’ But peradventure some may imagine, that there is something singular and extraordinary in these eminent persons, which we must never hope to equal; but must be content to follow them at a vast distance. Well, let this be so; what have we to say to whole churches animated by the same spirit of zeal? What are we to think of the churches of Macedonia, whose charity St. Paul thus magnifies, 2 Cor. viii, 2, 3: ‘In a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality. For to their power I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves.’ And St. Paul declares himself persuaded of the Romans, ‘that they were full of goodness, filled with all knowledge,’ Rom. xv, 14. And of the Corinthians he testifies, ‘That they were enriched in every thing, and came behind in no gift,’ 1 Cor. i, 5, 6. ‘That they did abound in all things, in faith, in diligence,’ &c., 2 Cor. viii, 7. I will stop here; ’tis in vain to heap up more instances: I have said enough to show, that vigour and fervency in the service of God is no miraculous gift, no extraordinary prerogative of some peculiar favourite of Heaven, but the natural and inseparable property of a well-confirmed habit of holiness.

“ Lastly: Is constancy and steadiness the property of an habit? It is an undoubted property of perfection

too. In Scripture, good men are everywhere represented 'as standing fast in the faith; steadfast and unmoveable in the works of God; holding fast their integrity:' in one word, as constantly following after righteousness, and maintaining a good conscience toward God and man. And so natural is this to one habitually good, that St. John affirms of such a one, 'that he cannot sin:' 1 John iii, 9, 'Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' Accordingly, Job is said 'to have feared God, and eschewed evil;' which must be understood of the constant course of his life. Zachary and Elizabeth are said to be 'righteous, walking in all the commandments of God blameless,' Luke i, 6. Enoch, Noah, David, and other excellent persons, who are pronounced by God 'righteous,' and 'just,' and 'perfect,' are said in Scripture, 'to walk with God, to serve him with a perfect heart, with a full purpose of heart to cleave to him,' and the like. And this is that constancy which Christians are often exhorted to: 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong,' 1 Cor. xvi, 13; and of which the first followers of our Lord left us such remarkable examples. The disciples are said to have been continually in the temple, 'blessing and praising God,' Luke xxiv. And the first Christians are said to 'have continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers,' Acts ii, 42.

"Thus I think I have sufficiently cleared my notion of perfection from Scripture. Nor need I multiply more texts, to prove what I think no man can doubt of, unless he mistake the main design and end of the gospel; which is to raise and exalt us to a steady habit of holiness: 'The end of the commandment,' saith

St. Paul, 1 Tim. i, 5, 'is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.' This is the utmost perfection man is capable of, to have his mind enlightened, and his heart purified; and to be informed, acted, and influenced by faith and love, as by a vital principle: and all this is essential to habitual goodness.

"If any one desire further light or satisfaction in this matter, let him read the eighth chapter to the Romans, and he will soon acknowledge, that he there finds the substance of what I have hitherto advanced. There, though the word itself be not found, the thing called perfection is described in all the strength and beauty, in all the pleasure and advantages of it: there the disciple of Jesus is represented as one 'who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;' as one 'whom the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set free from the law of sin and death;' one who *οὐ φρονεῖ*, 'does not mind or relish the things of the flesh, but the things of the Spirit;' one 'in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells:' he does not stand at the door and knock; he does not make a transient visit; but here he reigns, and rules, and inhabits: one, finally, in whom 'the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.' And the result of all this is the joy and confidence, the security and transport that becomes the child of God. 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.' And now 'tis no wonder, if the perfect man 'long for the revelation of the glory of the sons of God;' if he cry out in rapture, 'If God be for me, who can be against me?

who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? who shall separate me from the love of Christ?" and so on. If any one would see the perfect man described in fewer words, he needs but cast his eye on Rom. vi, 22, 'But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.'\*\*

So far, it would seem, this author would require a long time for the acquisition of the *settled habit* which constitutes *religious perfection*; but he subsequently alleges that this habit may be *infused by the Spirit of God*. Thus he proceeds:—"The doctrine of *infused habits* has been much ridiculed and exposed, as absurd, by some men; and I must confess, if it be essential to a habit, to be acquired by length of time, and repetition of the same acts, then an *infused habit* is a very odd expression. But why God cannot produce in us those strong dispositions to virtue in a moment, which are ordinarily produced by time; or why we may not ascribe as much efficacy to infused grace, as philosophers are wont to do to repeated acts, I cannot see. Nor can I see why such dispositions, when infused, may not be called habits, if they have all the properties and effects of an habit."†

Dr. Bates has a chapter on "the perfection of holiness," which, though somewhat exceptionable, yet is generally excellent, and as it constitutes something like a system, I shall insert it entire.

"I now come to discourse of the perfection of holiness, the sublime object and aim of the desires and endeavours of sincere Christians. I shall premise—There is a threefold perfection of holiness spoken of in Scripture: the perfection of innocence, the perfection of grace, and the perfection of glory.

\* Religious Perfection, pp. 1-17. † Ibid., p. 37.

“ 1. The perfection of innocence. God made man upright, in the bright image of his holiness. The excellency of the efficient cause infers the excellency of the effect; and the final cause was for his own glory, and man’s happiness, in order to which he was endowed with those moral perfections which qualified him to obtain that end. There was an exact regularity in all his faculties: the enlightened mind directed the will, the will commanded the affections, the affections ruled the senses. He had power to stand, but was free to fall: with his original perfection there was a possibility of sinning and dying. The eyes of his mind were clear, discovering his duty and felicity; and the assisting grace of God was like the sun shining in the air to actuate his visive faculty; but he wilfully shut his eye, and fell from that height of happiness into a pit without a bottom.

“ 2. The perfection of grace. This, in the language of Scripture, signifies uprightness and sincerity, and is attributed to the saints in several respects, which I will particularly consider.

“ 3. The perfection of glory. This implies a union of all excellences in a sovereign degree. The church in the present state is compared to the moon, that receives light from the sun in half its globe, but in the next state will be filled with light as a ball of crystal penetrated by the sun-beams. The church shall be glorious in holiness, without ‘spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,’ Eph. v, 27. Natural righteousness was of short continuance, as nature left to itself always is: but the supernatural state is not only undefiled, but fades not away. 1 Pet. i, 4. The perfection of paradise was frail, for man in his best state was changing: from this root his ruin sprang: but the perfection of heaven is immutable, for there God is all in all. 1 Cor.



xv, 28. His influxive presence is the productive and conservative cause of their holiness and blessedness.

“ I will now consider the perfection of grace that is attributed to the saints in the present state.

“ 1. There is an essential perfection, that consists in the unchangeable nature of things, and is absolutely requisite to the kind. A gradual perfection belongs to individuals, and is various : all gold is not refined to the same degree and height of purity : but true gold, though in the lowest degree of fineness, will endure the furnace and the touchstone, and by that trial is discerned from counterfeit metal. There are different degrees of active heat in fire : sometimes it flames, but always burns, if fed with combustible matter.

“ Now the essence of true holiness consists in a conformity to the nature and will of God, whereby a saint is distinguished from the unrenewed world, and is not actuated by their principles and precepts, not governed by their maxims and customs.

“ There are different degrees of holiness in the saints, but sincerity is inseparable from the being of it.

“ (1.) This includes a conformity in the heart and life to God. As a good complexion flourishes in the countenance from the root of a good constitution within, so real holiness shining in the conversation, proceeds from an internal principle of life seated in the mind and heart. The understanding esteems the precepts of God’s law, as best in themselves, and best for us : the will consents to the sanctity and royalty of the law. David declares, ‘ I esteem all thy commandments to be right : and I hate every false way,’ *Psa. cxix, 128*. If the divine will be the reason of our obedience, it will be impartial. Many elude duty, and deceive conscience by partial respects to the law : they will make amends for delinquencies in some things, by supererogations in

others that are suitable to their carnal ease and interest. Thus the Pharisees were mighty sons of the church, very accurate in sanctimonious forms, great pretenders to piety, but stained religion with injustice and uncharitableness. They pretended to love God, but hated their neighbour; they fasted twice a week, but devoured widows' houses; they were very nice in observing the numerous rites of religion, but neglected the duties of substantial goodness. There is not a more exact resemblance between the immediate sight of the face, and the sight of it by reflection in a clear and true glass, than the spirit of the old Pharisees is like the formalist in every age. Thus among the Papists, how many, under the veil of celibacy, conceal the grossest impurities, and under the appearance of poverty are covetous and rapacious! But our Saviour tells us, unless our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matt. v, 20. If our obedience be not of equal extent to the rule—if there be an indulgence to contravene any precept—the words of St. James are decisive and convincing: 'Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one instance, he is guilty of all,' James ii, 10. In one allowed sin of omission or commission, there is a universal disobedience to the authority of the Lawgiver. Although the best saint on earth is not without sin, [offences against the law of innocence,] yet the least is without guile.

“(2.) Sincerity produces constancy. There is a strict connection between the leading faculties, and their inward operations, with the outward actions. According to the renewed temper of the mind and will, such is the tenor of the life. Pure religion and undefiled before God, that is exercised from divine principles and eternal motives, will fortify a Christian against

all temptations : he will neither be allured nor terrified from his duty.

“ Some, when religion is in public esteem, are forward professors : but if the testimony of truth exposes them to reproach, as seditious and disloyal, and the consequences of that reproach, they will comply with the temper of the times to secure their secular interest. And as there are changes of garments, summer and winter garments according to the seasons of the year, so they have changes of religions as the times vary. Persecution discovers them to have been formal professors, without the spirit and depth of religion in their hearts. But sincere Christians are conspicuously such in the fiery trial. It is observed in digging wells in the hot months of July and August, if a vein of water flows, it is a sign of a lasting spring : thus if, in the burning heat of persecution, the profession of the pure religion is declared, it is an argument it proceeds from sincere grace, that will be ‘springing up to everlasting life,’ John iv, 14. There are numerous examples of the holy martyrs, who despised the enraged world, as a swarm of angry flies, and turned persecution into a pleasure, and with undeclining fervour and courage persevered in the confession of Christ, till they obtained the crown of eternal life. Unfeigned faith and sincere love are the strongest security against apostacy : he that is sound at the centre is unshaken by storms. The double-minded, whose hearts are divided between the enlightened conscience and their carnal affections, are unstable in all their ways. James i, 8.

“ Some have short expiring fits of devotion : while they are in afflicting circumstances either by terrors of conscience, or diseases in their bodies, or disasters in their estates, they resolve to be regular and reformed in their lives, to walk circumspectly and exactly : but

when they are released from their troubles, they degenerate from their designs, and falsify their resolutions, and, like a lion slipt from his chain, that returns to his fierceness with his liberty, so they relapse into their old rebellious sins. The reason is, they were not inwardly cleansed from the love of sin, nor changed into the likeness of God. In all their miseries they were in the state of unrenewed nature, though restrained from the visible eruptions of it. But real saints have their conversation all of a colour: in prosperity and adversity they are holy and heavenly.

“In short, sincere Christians study the divine law to know the extent of their duty, and delight in the discovery of it: they do not decline the strictest scrutiny. It is David’s prayer, ‘Lord, search me, and try me, and see whether there be any way of wickedness in me,’ Psa. cxxxix, 23, 24, and discover it to me, that I may forsake it. Conscience will be quick and tender like the eye, which, if any dirt be in it, weeps it out. There may be rebels in a loyal city, but they are not concealed and cherished: the loyal subjects search to discover them, and cast them out: but the hypocrites ‘hate the light, because their deeds are evil,’ John iii, 20; they cherish a wilful ignorance, that they may freely enjoy their lusts. The sincere Christian aims at perfection: he prays, resolves, watches, mourns, and strives against every sin. This is as necessary to uprightness, as it is impossible we should be without spot or blemish here: but the hypocrite, though he externally complies with some precepts of easy obedience, yet he will not forsake his sweet sins. Now if any sin be entertained or unrenounced by a person, he is unregenerate, and a captive of Satan: as if a bird be ensnared by one leg, it is as surely the prey of the fowler, as if it were seized by both wings.

“I shall only add, sincerity commends us to God; it gives value to the meanest service, and the want of it corrupts the most eminent service. Jehu’s zeal was a bloody murder, though the destruction of Ahab’s family was commanded by God.

“The consciousness of sincerity rejoices the living saint with present comfort, and the dying with the hopes of future happiness. The apostle, when surrounded with calamities, declares, ‘This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that with simplicity, and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in this world,’ 2 Cor. i, 12. Hezekiah, having received a mortal message by the prophet, addressed himself to God, ‘Remember, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee, in truth, with a perfect heart,’ 2 Kings xx, 3. Truth and perfection are equivalent; this was a reviving cordial in his dying hour. A sincere life is attended with a happy death, and that is attended with a more happy life. God is the rewarder of moral virtues with temporal blessings, but he is the eternal reward of godly sincerity. This is the first notion of perfect holiness in the present state.

“2. There is an integral perfection of holiness: that is, an entire union of all those sanctifying graces of which the image of God consists. The new creature in its forming is not like the effects of art, but the living productions of nature. A sculptor, in making a statue of marble, finishes the head, when the other part is but rude stone; but all the parts of a child are gradually formed together, till the body is complete. The Holy Spirit, in renewing a man, infuses a universal habit of holiness, that is comprehensive of all the variety of graces to be exercised in the life of a Christian. As the corrupt nature, styled the old man, is complete in its earthly members, all the lusts of the flesh, both



of the desiring and angry appetite, and disposes, without the corrective of restraining grace, the natural man to yield to all temptations: to be fierce with the contentious, licentious with the dissolute, intemperate with the drunkard, lascivious with the impure, and impious with the scorers of religion—so the divine nature, styled the new man, is complete in all spiritual graces, and inclines and enables the sanctified to do every good work. ‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,’ Gal. v, 22, 23. Although they are distinguished in their activity, and particular objects, yet they always are joined in the same subject, and centre in God, who is immutably holy and one. They are mixed in their exercise without confusion. As in a chorus the variety of voices is harmonious and conspiring; so in spiritual graces, according to the degrees of their perfection, such is the degree of their union. Every real saint is conformed to Christ, of whom ‘he receives grace for grace,’ John i, 16. There are spiritual gifts of arbitrary dispensation: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, the gifts of healing, the works of miracles, (1 Cor. xii, 8–10,) are separately given. But when the Spirit prepares a soul for his habitation, he purifies it from sin, and adorns it with every grace: if there be a defect of any grace, the opposite sin in its power remains in the soul, and makes it impossible for the Holy Spirit to dwell there.

“It is to be observed, that when a promise is made as to any particular grace in Scripture, that grace is to be considered in union with other graces. Our Saviour tells us, ‘Whoever believes, shall be saved,’ John iii. And St. Paul, inspired by the Spirit of our Saviour, saith, that faith separate from charity is of no avail for salvation: ‘Though I have all faith, so that I could

remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing,' 1 Cor. xiii, 2. A faith that does not work by love, and is not productive of obedience, is of no saving efficacy. St. James puts the question, 'What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and hath not works? Can faith save him?' James ii, 14. It is evident it does not: for nothing asserts or denies more strongly than a question. He that does not, by faith in the Son of God, live a holy life, must die for ever. St. John assures us, that we are in a state of favour with God, if we love the brethren: 'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren,' 1 John iii, 14. But the sincerity of our love to the children of God is proved by our love to God, and keeping his commandments, (1 John v, 2,) and is inseparable from it. Wherever salvation is promised to a particular duty, it must be understood in a collective sense. We read, 'Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved,' Acts ii, 21. But a prevailing prayer must proceed from a holy person, who keeps the commands of God, and does those things that are pleasing in his sight. 1 John iii, 22. The prayer must be mixed with faith and fervency: 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much,' James v, 16. The connection of saving graces cannot be broken. St. Peter excites us, 2 Pet. i, 5-7, to give all diligence to add to our faith in the mysteries of godliness, virtue; an active power to render it lively and operative, otherwise faith is a mere speculative dead assent: 'to virtue, knowledge;' prudence to direct its exercise in the seasons wherein, and the manner how, our duties are to be performed: 'to knowledge, temperance;' to regulate our appetites and enjoyments in the use of things pleasing to the senses: 'to temperance, patience;' to endure the evils to which we

are exposed in this lower state ; which is equally, if not more necessary and excellent : for human nature is more affected and tempted by sharp pains and grief, than delighted with pleasure. Without the exercise of these graces, our religion will be by fits and flashes, with interrupting intervals : ‘ to patience, godliness ;’ that is, a respect to the commands of God as our rule, and his glory as our end, that is distinguished from mere morality ; that proceeds only from human reason, and respects the civil happiness : ‘ to godliness, brotherly-kindness ;’ a sincere love to all of the same heavenly extraction, in whom the image of God shines : ‘ and to brotherly-kindness, charity ;’ that extends to all the partakers of our common nature. All spiritual graces take their residence together in the soul ; not one singly enters, and keeps entire possession. Our Saviour tells the young man who had lived so regularly, that he was lovely in his eyes : ‘ If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all, and give to the poor, and come follow me,’ Matt. xix, 21. He wanted charity and self-denial to make his obedience entire.

“ 3. There is a comparative perfection : this in Scripture is intellectual or moral.

“(1.) Intellectual perfection. The apostle excites the Hebrews, ‘ Wherefore, leaving the doctrine of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to perfection,’ Heb. vi, 1, to more eminent degrees in the knowledge of the gospel, both of the supernatural doctrines of the gospel, and the duties contained in it. Of the first the apostle is to be understood, ‘ We speak wisdom among those that are perfect,’ 1 Cor. ii, 6 ; that is, declare divine mysteries to those who are prepared to receive them. The light of nature declares the being of God, and his essential perfections, wisdom, power, and goodness, shining in his works ; but not his counsels, in order to

our salvation: 'No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him,' John i, 18. There are some notices of good and evil, of virtue and vice, by the instructive light of reason, but not sufficient to inform us of our full duty. The discovery of the purity and perfection of the moral law is from God. The gospel, like a clear and equal glass, that discovers the beauties and blemishes of the face, makes known to us what defiles and what beautifies the soul.

"Now it is our duty to increase in knowledge, both in the extent and degrees, and in the quality and efficacy of it.

"In the extent and degrees. There is a mutual dependance of divine truths; one illustrates and infers another: there is a harmonious agreement between them; one supports another; and it is our duty to apply our minds intensely to understand them. How many that have the revelation of the gospel are mean proficient in the school of heaven! Of these the apostle speaks with reprehension: 'They needed to be taught again the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such that had need of milk, and not of strong meat: whereas others were come to full age, and had their senses exercised, to discern more perfectly good and evil,' Heb. v, 12, 14. How many professors need the first principles of religion to be planted in them! They pretend, to exempt their ignorance from discredit, that it only belongs to the ministers of the word to study the mysteries of religion: but it is of infinite consequence they should be wise to salvation. 2 Tim. iii, 15. Our Saviour tells us, 'This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent,' John xvii, 3. The dispensation of the gospel is a state of perfection. It

is the full and final declaration of God's will, in order to our future blessedness : it is not a provisional establishment, as the Levitical law : there is no other alliance to be made between God and men ; no other sacrifice to be offered for sin : all the types and prophecies are completely fulfilled in Christ. Now some understand more clearly and distinctly the contrivance and parts of our mysterious redemption ; and are comparatively perfect. All the treasures of the world are in real value infinitely inferior to saving truths. There may be knowledge without saving grace : but no saving grace without knowledge. The understanding is the leading faculty ; conversion begins in the renewal of the mind : ' Ye were darkness, now ye are light in the Lord,' Eph. v, 8. The gospel cannot be profitable for our holiness and comfort, but by the intervening of the enlightened applicative understanding ; the conscience, that discovers the will of God to us, from whence our immediate obligation arises to obey it.

" It is true, some doctrines of the gospel are fundamental, and some are perfective : some are not of that consequence and clearness as others ; and the ignorance of them is not damning, nor the knowledge of them saving. But every divine truth is worthy of our attentive consideration, according to our capacity ; for they contribute to our perfection. We should strive to advance in knowledge ; that, as the sun gradually ascends the horizon, till it gives light to the day, and day to the world ; so our knowledge of Christ should be more clear and extensive, till we are completely transformed into his glorious image : when we shall see him as he is, we shall be entirely like him. 1 John iii, 2.

" As our knowledge is more vital, affective, and practical, it is more perfective of us. Divine truths



have a goodness in them, and are not duly known, without a steadfast belief of their truth, and a just estimate of their goodness; when the conviction of the mind, and the consent of the will, is influential upon our lives. The knowledge of some things is merely speculative. One knows that the eclipse of the sun is from the interposing of the moon between that globe of light and our sight, and the mind acquiesces in the theory; for it is of no practical use: but the knowledge that sin separates between God and us, and intercepts the light of his countenance from shining upon us, is infinitely profitable to make us fearful to offend him, that we may not be deprived of the joyful sense of his love. Spiritual knowledge includes a correspondent permanent impression upon the heart, and in the life to the nature of sanctifying truths. In civil matters there is a knowledge of discourse and direction, and a knowledge of performance: and in holy things there is a knowledge of apprehension and in words, and a knowledge that orders the conversation aright. The first is not only fruitless, but accidentally pernicious: according to Solomon's expression, 'He that increases knowledge increases sorrow,' Eccles. i, 18. A smaller degree of knowledge of God and Christ that is productive of love and obedience, is far more valuable than a more large and accurate knowledge of the divine attributes, of the union of the natures and offices of Christ, that is not fruitful in good works: as a spot of ground, cultivated according to its quality, is more profitable than a large field that lies waste.

"(2.) Moral perfection is evident by a threefold comparison:—1. Of the saints with visible sinners 2. Of the saints among themselves. 3. Of some eminent acts of grace, with lower acts in the same kind.

"[1.] The comparison of saints with visible sinners

makes them appear as perfect. There is a mixture of principles in the best [of the merely justified] of flesh and spirit, inherent corruption, and infused grace, and the operations flowing from them accordingly are mixed. But as one who has not the brightest colours of white and red in the complexion appears an excellent beauty set off by the presence of a blackamoor, so the beauty of holiness in a saint, though mixed with blemishes, appears complete when compared with the foul deformity of sinners. Thus the opposition between them is expressed, 'He destroys the perfect and the wicked,' Job ix, 22. It is recorded of Noah, that he was a 'just man, and perfect in his generations,' Gen. vi, 9, in an age when wickedness reigned, when chastity was expelled from the number of virtues—when impiety was arrived at the highest pitch, and the deluge was necessary to purge the world from such sinners: then the sanctity and piety of Noah shined as brightness issues from the stars. He appeared perfectly good, compared with the prodigiously bad.

"[2.] In comparing the saints among themselves, some are styled perfect. There are different degrees among sinners: some are so disposed to wickedness, that they may be denominated from as many vices that possess their souls, as the evil spirit, in the man spoken of in the gospel, answered, his name was Legion, from the number of devils that possessed him. They drive through all the degrees of sin so violently and furiously, that, compared to them, other sinners seem innocent, and are far less obnoxious to judgment.

"Thus there are singular saints whose graces are so conspicuous and convincing, and a universal holiness appears in their conversation, which makes them venerable among the vicious. Their presence will re-

strain the dissolute from excesses either in words or actions, as effectually as a magistrate by the terror of his power. As to other saints, though sincere, yet there is such a mixture of shades and lights in their actions, that they are in low esteem. Compare meek Moses with the passionate prophet Jonah, who justified his anger to the face of God himself, 'I do well to be angry, even unto death,' Jonah iv, 9. We read of Moses, that he was the meekest man upon the face of the earth. Num. xii, 3. Of this there is recorded a very eminent effect and evidence. When Aaron and Miriam had contumeliously and seditiously spoke against him, as if he had usurped undue authority, 'Hath the Lord only spoken by Moses? hath he not also spoken by us?' verse 2, he might by a sharp reply have confounded them, but he was silent. Several circumstances concur to heighten the value of his victory over himself. There was a double offence, and violation of the respects due to the dignity of his person, and the nearness of the relation. This accusation was public before the congregation of Israel: in the heat of the contention, when there is a great disposition to be fired by anger—when the silent and patient bearing the indignity might be interpreted as a conviction of his guilt—yet he calmly endured their false charge. How great is the disparity between Moses and Jonah!

“ [3.] In comparing some raised acts of grace with lower in the same kind, there is a perfection attributed to them. As it is in diamonds, many small ones are not of equal value with one great one, though of equal weight with it: so one act of piety, of faith, of charity, of self-denial, may, for its rareness, exemplariness, and efficacy, have such a divine degree of worth in it, that it far excels many less illustrious effects of those graces.

As a single act of wickedness may be so extremely evil, so enormously vicious as to exceed many crimes in its pollution and guilt of the same kind. There are some instances of this in Scripture: Ahaz, in the time of his distress, 'did yet trespass more against the Lord,' 2 Chron. xxviii, 22. Judgments, in their nature and God's design, are fit means to soften the obdurate, as iron is made malleable by the fire: but to kick against the pricks—to be more stubborn by the infliction of wrath, that should correct men into their duty—is a wickedness so unnatural and prodigious, that it has left a brand of infamy on him for ever: 'This is that king Ahaz,' that desperate rebel against God. The idolatry of Manasseh was aggravated with such open contempt of God, that made it infinitely more provoking than the secret idolatry of others. It is related, 'He set a carved image, that he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house will I put my name for ever,' 2 Chron. xxxiii, 7. He deposed God, and with the boldest defiance set an idol in his throne before his face.

"I will produce some instances of the exercise of grace in its radiancy and power, both in doing and suffering.

"Abraham received a command, 'Take now thy son, thy only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering,' Gen xxii, 2. How many circumstances, with respect to nature and grace, increased the difficulty of his obedience! The command was so hard, God would not permit the fulfilling it. Isaac was the object of his most ardent desires, in whom he lived more dearly than in himself. When his own life was almost expired, and was miraculously renewed in his son, the heir of the promise, in whose seed all the na-

tions of the world were to be blessed, (ver. 18,) how grievous to human affections, not only to be a spectator, but actor! the priest to offer the sacrifice! Yet 'he rose early,' and 'went to the place of which God had told him.' Ver. 3. He applied himself without relenting or delay—that would have argued unwillingness, in such a severe trial. He built an altar, bound Isaac, and laid him on the altar, and stretched out his hand to slay him, if he had not been countermanded by a call from heaven. In this work was his faith made perfect, James ii, 22, and appears in its exaltation. This was an act so pleasing to God, that he declared his approving and accepting it by a voice from heaven. His obedience to the divine command to leave his country, and go into a strange land, was the excellent effect of his faith in the promise of God, but less illustrious than the offering of his son.

“The self-denial of Moses was as perfect and admirable in its kind: ‘When he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter,’ Heb. xi, 24. When he understood the value of a crown, with the honours and riches annexed to it: in the age of youth and strength, when the carnal appetites are vehemently inclined to pleasures, and there was an opportunity of the freest fruition: then he chose rather to suffer ‘affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.’ Ver. 25. It is prudent advice not to choose when the passions are in a ferment and disorder: it is like eating meat in a fever, that increases the feverish heat, and destroys the vitals. A terrible temptation hinders deliberation, and a free judgment of what is our duty to choose: a pleasant temptation corrupts the mind, that we do not discern the true from the false good. Yet Moses, in that time of his life when the sensual passions are most



inflamed and urgent, had his mind so clear and calm, that he deliberately, and with a full choice, preferred disgrace, poverty, and persecution, before the variety of attractive delights that ravish the carnal senses. Such was the sovereignty of his faith, that it composed the unruly passions, and kept them in obedience.

“ The patience of Job is as rare an instance, who was exposed to all the cruelty and arts of the tempter to overcome him. If we consider the nature of his afflictions, and their immediate succession like waves of the sea—that he was suddenly and unexpectedly stripped of his estate, deprived of his children, and his body was covered with loathsome and painful ulcers, that Satan was confident his misery would so exasperate his spirit, that he would blaspheme God to his face—yet he blessed him with the most humble reverence and resigned submission to his sovereign will. Add another consideration: when his wife, that should have been a comforter, insulted over him, and became a tempter, he repelled her with holy zeal and constancy. The tempter, neither by assaults on his body, nor by treachery in his wife, could prevail. In him patience had its perfect work. James i, 4. It is recorded as the most celebrated instance in that kind: ‘ You have heard of the patience of Job, and seen the end of the Lord,’ James v, 11. I shall only add the example of the three Hebrew martyrs, who, when the proud and cruel king commanded them to bow to the golden idol, or threatened to cast them into the burning furnace, with unshaken courage exposed themselves to his fury to preserve their integrity. In them perfect love cast out fear.

“ 4. There is a relative perfection of holiness according to the several conditions of the saints in this life. As in a garden, there are trees that produce different

fruits, and of different degrees of goodness—the vine, the fig-tree, the apple-tree: if an apple-tree produce the best fruits in its kind, though not equal to the fruit of the vine, it is perfectly good. Thus in the world there are several conditions of life among men: some are in places of dignity and superiority; others of subjection and service. A servant that is faithful and diligent, adorns the gospel, Tit. ii, 10, and excels in that relation, and is equally accepted of God, as others in a higher order. He that gained two talents was esteemed as faithful as he that gained five, because the profit resulting from the improvement was in proportion to the stock intrusted with him.

“There is a perfection relative to the various spiritual states of Christians here. St. John addresses his counsel to Christians under several titles, to children, to young men, and fathers, with respect to their different ages in Christianity. A child is perfect in the quality of a child, when he has the stature, the strength, the understanding that is becoming his age, though he is distant from that complete state to which he will arrive in his mature age. A young man has the perfection proper to his age. A new convert that has such degrees of knowledge and holiness as are suitable to the means and his time of advancement by them, is esteemed complete in that state of grace. Some are entered into the school of heaven, and are in the first lessons of Christianity; others have made higher progress in it, to the fulness of the stature. Eph. iv, 13.

“Beyond the perfection attainable here, there is an absolute perfection of holiness in the extent of its parts, and intention of degrees. It is our present duty to aspire and endeavour after this, but attained only in heaven, where every saint is renewed into the perfect image of God, and made glorious in holiness, the great

end of our Saviour's love in dying for us. By gradations Christians ascend to that consummate state, the period of perfection."\*

Bishop Taylor says :—" We must turn from all our evil ways, leaving no sin unmortified : that is one measure of perfection ; it is a perfect conversion. We must have charity : that is another perfection ; it is a perfect grace. We must be ready to part with all for conscience' sake, and to die for Christ : that is perfect obedience, and the most perfect love. We must conform to the divine will in doing and suffering : that is perfect patience. We must live in all holy conversation and godliness : that is a perfect state. We must ever be going forward, and growing in godliness, that so we may be perfect men in Christ Jesus. And we must persevere unto the end : that is perfection, and the crown of all the rest. If any thing less than this were intended, it cannot be told how the gospel should be a holy institution, or that God should require of us to live a holy life ; but if any thing more than this were intended, it is impossible but all mankind should perish. Like to this is *toto corde*, loving and serving God with all our heart, and with all our strength. That this is possible, is folly to deny. For he that saith he cannot do a thing with all his strength, that is, that he cannot do what he can do, knows not what he says ; and yet to do this is the highest measure and sublimity of perfection, and of keeping the commandments."

The learned John Goodwin says :—" That it is a duty lying upon all men to strive after that which the Scripture calleth perfection ; and, consequently, to exercise themselves in such things which are proper to invest them with such a capacity as we speak of, to qualify them for the high places in the world to come,

\* *Spiritual Perfection*, pp. 86 106.

is of easy demonstration and proof, both from the Scripture and otherwise. 'Be you therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.' It might be translated more emphatically, 'You shall therefore be perfect;' for so the future tense in the indicative mood is many times used, instead of the imperative, only with the greater seriousness and weight. As he that enjoineth, or commandeth, when he would signify and express his authority to the height, he doth not simply say unto him that he would have him to do a thing, Do this, or that, but he saith unto him, You shall do it, or, You must do it. So here, You shall be perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect; as if he should say, I impose it upon you as a matter of sovereign concernment, both unto me and to yourselves, that you give out yourselves to the utmost in striving to imitate the perfection of your heavenly Father, and to be as absolute in all things appertaining unto you to do, as he is in all things that are honourable and proper for so great a majesty to do."\*

Mr. Norris says:—"Heaven is but a state of the most perfect and consummated love; and therefore the best thing we can practise on earth is to tune our hearts to this divine strain; to set them as high as we can; for surely the best preparation for love must be love itself. But whatever other qualifications are requisite, a heart once truly touched with this divine passion cannot long want them. Love will draw along after it all other virtues, will perfect and improve them, and will at least hide those faults of them which it cannot correct. For this is that universal excellency which supplies the defects of other works, but which, if wanting, nothing else can supply or compound for. Neither tongues, nor prophecy, nor knowledge, nor faith, nor

\* On being filled with the Spirit.

alms, nor even martyrdom itself, signify any thing without charity. The heart is the sacrifice that God demands ; and unless that be offered, the richest oblation will find no acceptance. Other gifts and graces, whether intellectual or moral, come indeed from heaven, but they often leave us upon earth. Love only elevates us up thither, and is able to unite us to God. By faith we live upon God ; by obedience we live to him ; but it is by love alone that we live in him. And how pure and chaste must that soul be that is thoroughly purged of all created loves, and in whom the love of God reigns absolute and unrivalled, without any mixture or competition ! How secure must he needs be from sin, when he has not that in him which may betray him to it ! The tempter may come, but he will find nothing in him to take hold of ; the world may spread round about him a poisonous breath, but it will not hurt him ; the very cleanness of his constitution will guard him from the infection. He has but one love at all in his heart, and that is for God ; and how can he, that loves nothing but God, be tempted to transgress against him, when he has nothing to separate him from him, and all that is necessary, perhaps all that is possible, to unite him to him ? What is there that should tempt such a man to sin ; and what temptation is there that he has not to incite him to all goodness ; and what a wonderful progress must he needs make in it ? Whither will not the entire love of God carry him ; and to what degrees of Christian perfection will he not aspire, under the conduct of so divine, so omnipotent a principle ?”\*

Dr. Worthington says :—“ Various have been the disputes which, from St. Austin’s days to the present time, have been agitated between several sects and denominations of Christians concerning perfection, and

\* On the Love of God.



the attainableness of it; the chief ground of which I take to have been the supposition, that human nature is not generally capable of rising above its present level. And therefore those who have formed the highest notion of perfection, have pretended most to it, have most strongly recommended it to others, and pleaded for the attainableness of it, have met with so little success; but have generally been looked upon as no better than enthusiasts, and their labours have either tended to make others such, or have been received with coldness and indifference, if not rejected with contempt. And, indeed, while we suppose the present degeneracy of human nature to be invincible, we cannot form any notion of human perfection but what necessarily includes a contradiction in it; or if we understand it in its just sense and full import, we must, by the supposition, give up the attainableness of it. So that all talk about perfection must, on this supposition, be absurd and idle, and all pretences to it must become airy and chimerical. But if, on the one hand, we suppose that nature shall, by degrees, be so refined by grace, as at length to be fully recovered of its present disorders; then all difficulties immediately vanish, and we may easily apprehend what is meant by Christian perfection in its full extent; this being but another word for the recovery of the original perfection of our nature, to which, when it is arrived at its full height, I conceive it will be in no respect inferior. That human nature shall in this life arrive at such a complete state of perfection as this, besides what has been already observed, may be further argued from the consequences of the opposite opinion. For I conceive, that the doctrine of the impossibility of attaining perfection, and freedom from sin, is injurious to our Saviour Christ, derogates from the power and virtue of his sacrifice, and renders

his mission, as to the main end of it, in a great measure ineffectual.”\*

Robert Barclay states the views of the Society of Friends as follows :—“In whom this holy and pure birth is fully brought forth, the body of death and sin comes to be crucified and removed, and their hearts united and subjected to the truth, so as not to obey any suggestion or temptation of the evil one, but to be free from actual sinning, and transgressing of the law of God, and in that respect perfect. Yet doth this perfection still admit of a growth; and there remaineth a possibility of sinning, where the mind doth not most diligently and watchfully attend unto the Lord.”†

All these, and many other authors, assert the general doctrine of Christian perfection; and, in the main, they embrace under this general notion precisely what we consider as belonging to it. On some points, however, of more or less importance, several of them fail to meet our views. Dr. Lucas embraces in his view of a *habit of righteousness* all that we understand by Christian perfection. Dr. Bates fails in not presenting the proper standard of Christian perfection. We may admit his views of *comparative perfection*, provided we still maintain an infallible standard of holiness erected in the gospel, conformity to which, independent of the practice of Christians in general, constitutes the perfection of Christian character in the view of God. The term perfection is used, occasionally, in a modified sense, for a state above the *ordinary grade* of piety, where it does not imply all that we mean by Christian perfection, or all that it generally implies. Such passages we do not use as proof texts in this discussion.

\* Worthington on Redemption.

† Neal's History of the Puritans, Appendix, p. 573.

## LECTURE V.

## CONTROVERSIES UPON THE SUBJECT OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

“Prove all things : hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thess. v, 21.

THE conflict between the two great doctrinal systems called Pelagianism and Augustinism commenced in the early part of the fifth century. These systems divided upon the subjects of *original sin*, *free will*, *grace*, and *predestination*. Upon these subjects Augustine, bishop of Hyppo, in Africa, entertained views generally consistent and sober, until brought into conflict with Pelagius and Caelestius, two shrewd and speculating monks from the British isle. The controversy was prosecuted with great heat on both sides, and unfortunately resulted in planting the seeds of two classes of errors, about equally injurious to the true interests of the church.

The views of Pelagius and Augustine on original sin are thus stated in juxtaposition by Professor Wiggers. The Pelagian theory is embraced in the following three propositions :—

“1. A propagation of sin by generation, is by no means to be admitted. This physical propagation of sin can be admitted only when we grant the propagation of the soul by generation. But this is an heretical error. Consequently there is no original sin; and nothing in the moral nature of man has been corrupted by Adam’s sin.”

“2. Adam’s transgression was imputed to himself, but not to his posterity. A reckoning of Adam’s sin as that of his posterity, would conflict with the divine

rectitude. Hence bodily death is no punishment of Adam's imputed sin, but a necessity of nature."

"3. Now, as sin itself has no more passed over to Adam's posterity than has the punishment of sin, so every man, in respect to his *moral* nature, is born in just the same state in which Adam was first created."\*

The Augustinian theory is as follows :—

"1. Adam's sin has been propagated among all men, and will always be propagated, and that by sensual lust in procreation, (*concupiscentia*,) by which man, in his natural state, is subjected to the devil.

"2. The propagation of Adam's sin among his posterity is a punishment of the same sin. The sin was the punishment of the sin. The corruption of human nature, in the whole race, was the righteous punishment of the transgression of the first man, in whom all men already existed.

"3. The other penalties of Adam's sin, bodily death, the toil of labour, the shame of nakedness, sensual lust, pains of parturition, &c., also came upon his posterity; and, moreover, the physical punishment of Adam's sin, just as much as the moral, was a *positive* penalty.

"4. And as not only Adam's sin as a punishment, but also the other penalties came upon his posterity, there hence follows from it the entire moral and physical corruption of human nature. From that source, every man brings into the world a nature already so corrupt, that he is not only more inclined to evil than to good, but he can do nothing but sin, and is, on this

\* An Historical Presentation of Augustinism and Pelagianism from the original Sources, by G. F. Wiggers, D. D., Professor of Theology in the University of Rostock. Translated from the German, with notes and additions, by Rev. Ralph Emerson, Professor of Eccl. Hist. in the Theol. Sem., Andover, Mass., pp. 84-86.

account, subject to the righteous sentence of condemnation.

“5. This original sin, however, is nothing substantial, but is a quality of the affections, (affectionalis qualitas,) and a vice indeed, (vitium,) a weakness, (languor.)”\*

These are the ultra notions of the two great champions in this controversy. It is scarcely necessary in this place to add notes of explanation or caution to the statements. I have introduced them here, to show that the two systems began to diverge upon first principles, and that subsequent and less important differences are to be traced to those which are primary and fundamental.

On the subjects of free will, grace, and keeping the law, opposite views were entertained by the two disputants and their respective adherents. Pelagius maintained that the will is naturally free to do good, and is not at all impaired by the fall; that there are no special influences of the Spirit in regeneration, but all the helps that are necessary in that work is *instruction*, and that man can by this aid *perfectly keep the law*. It has often been alleged that Pelagius maintained “that it was not only possible for men to become *impeccable* in this life; but that several had actually attained that degree of perfection.”† But this seems to be an inference of his opponents. Professor Wiggers has given us numerous quotations of the language of Pelagius, taken from the Works of Augustine. And though generally it is not certain that a writer does justice to his antagonist in quoting his language, yet it is always fair to conclude that he does not present the doctrines of his opponent in too favourable a light. This certainly

\* Historical Presentation, &c., p. 88.

† Collier's Historical Dictionary, art. PELAGIUS.



cannot be concluded in relation to so heated a writer as Augustine.

Pelagius was brought before a council of fourteen bishops belonging to Palestine, at Diospolis, (Lydda,) A.D. 415, to answer to sundry charges. Charge vi. is, "Pelagius has said, that man may be without sin." To this Pelagius responds, "I have indeed said that man may be without sin, and keep God's commandments, if he will. For this ability God has given him. But I have not said that any one can be found, from infancy to old age, who has never sinned; but, being converted from sin, by his own labour and God's grace he can be without sin; still, he is not by this immutable for the future."\*

Pelagius was here pressed with the objection, that, according to his system, man could do all that the law required without divine aid, whereas Christ says, "Without me ye can do nothing." To meet this objection he explains himself: "Our being able to do, say, think all good, is the work of Him that has given us this ability, and that aids this ability; but that we do, or speak, or think *well*, is ours, because we are also able to turn all these to evil."† He admits the grace of God in our good exercises, but in a very qualified sense. Under grace he comprehends,

"1. The power of doing good, (*possibilitas boni*), and therefore especially free will itself. 'We distinguish three things,' says he, in the passage above cited on free will, 'the ability, the willing, and the being, (the *posse*, *velle*, and *esse*.) The ability we place in nature; the willing in the will, the *being* in the effect. The first, that is, the ability, pertains properly to God, who has conferred it on his creature; the other two, the willing and the being, are to be referred to man, as

\* Historical Presentation, &c., p. 157.

† Ibid., p. 179.

they descend from the fountain of the will. Hence, in the intention and in the good act, is the praise of man; nay, both of man and of God, who gave the ability for the intention itself and for the act, and who always aids the ability itself by the help of his grace. But that man is *able* to will and to do, is of God alone.’”\* And hence the Carthaginian synod, in their letter to Innocent, say, “Pelagius and Caelestius maintain, that the grace of God must be placed in his having so constituted and endowed the nature of man, that it can fulfil the law of God by its own will.”†

“2. Under the term grace, Pelagius included the revelation, the law, and the example of Christ, by which the practice of virtue is made easier for man. In this sense, Pelagius said, (De Lib. Arbitrio, in Augustine’s De Gr. Chr. 10,) ‘God works in us to will what is good, to will what is holy, while, by the greatness of future glory and the promise of future rewards, he rouses us, who are devoted to earthly desires and delighting like dumb beasts in the present; while, by the revelation of wisdom, he rouses our stupid will to a longing desire for God; and while he commends to us all that is good.’”‡

Upon this position Augustine makes the following strong animadversions:—“‘They are most vehemently and strenuously to be resisted, who suppose that, by the mere power of the human will, without God’s grace, they can either perfect righteousness, or attain to it by protracted effort. And when they begin to be pressed with the question, How they presume to assert this as taking place without divine aid, they check themselves, nor dare to utter the word, because they see how impious and intolerable it is. But they say, that these

\* Historical Presentation, pp. 179, 180.

† Ibid., p. 180.

‡ Ibid., p. 181.

things do not take place without divine aid, inasmuch as God has both created man with free will, and, *by giving precepts, teaches him how he ought to live; and in this, certainly, he aids, as he removes ignorance by instruction*, so that man may know what he ought to avoid and what to seek in his actions, and thus by free will, which is naturally implanted, entering the way that is pointed out, and by living continently, and justly, and piously, he deserves to attain the blessed and eternal life.' Grace, in this sense, Pelagius regarded as necessary in order to be without sin. 'No man is without sin, who has not attained the knowledge of law.'\*\*

"3. As already appears from the quotations, Pelagius comprehended likewise under grace, the forgiveness of sins and future salvation. The Pelagian heresy maintains, that the grace of God consists in our being so made as to be able, by our own will, to abstain from sin, and in God's giving us the help of his law and his commands, and *in his pardoning the previous sins of those who return to him*. In these particulars alone is the grace of God to be placed, and not in the aid to particular acts. For man can be without sin and fulfil God's commands, if he will. De Gest. 35. In his commentary on Rom. v, 6, Pelagius remarks: 'The apostle designs to show, that Christ died for the ungodly in order to commend his grace by the contemplation of beneficence.' 'He confesses,' says Augustine, (De Nat. et Gr. 18,) 'that sins already committed must be divinely expiated, and that prayer must be made to God in order to merit pardon (propter veniam promerendam :) for his much praised power of nature and the will of man, as himself confesses, cannot undo what is already done. In this necessity, therefore,

\* Historical Presentation, pp. 181, 182.

nothing is left but for him to pray for pardon.' And even in respect to grace in this sense, according to the complaint at Diospolis, Caelestius, in the spirit of the Pelagian theory, would have something meritorious, on man's part, to precede his becoming a participant of the grace. 'Pardon is not granted to the penitent [merely] according to the grace and mercy of God, but according to the merits and labour of those who have become worthy of mercy by repentance.'"\*

"4. Pelagius also used *grace* for *gracious influences*, that is, for God's supernatural influences on the Christian, by which his understanding is enlightened, and the practice of virtue is rendered easy to him. To this relate the words already quoted from the work in favour of free will. 'God aids us, inasmuch as he enlightens us by the manifold and *unspeakable* gift of heavenly grace.' In his commentary on the declaration of the apostle, (2 Cor. iii, 2,) *For ye are the epistle of Christ*, he gives this explanation to the words: 'It is manifest to all, that ye have believed on Christ through our doctrine, the Holy Ghost confirming the power.'"+

Another council of bishops was assembled at Carthage in 418, for the purpose of proscribing Pelagianism. The general synod (or *plenary council*, as it is called) put forth nine canons against the heresy. Those relating to keeping the law, or to legal perfection, are as follows:—

"VI. Whoever shall say, that the grace of justification is given to us, so that we through grace may the more easily do what we are commanded to do through free will, as though, if grace were not given, we could fulfil the divine commands even without it, though not easily, let him be anathema. For the Lord was speaking of the fruits of commandments, when he said, not,

\* Historical Presentation, p. 182. † Ibid., p. 183.

Without me ye do *with more difficulty*; but, Without me ye can do *nothing*.

“VII. Whoever thinks that what the apostle John says, If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, is to be received as if he were to say, It does not become us on the score of *humility*, not that of *truth*, to say, We have no sin, let him be anathema. For the apostle goes on to say, But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just who forgiveth our sins and cleanseth us from all iniquity. Where it sufficiently appears, that this is not only said humbly, but also truly. For the apostle could have said, If we say we have no sin, we *exalt* ourselves, and *humility* is not in us. He sufficiently shows, that whoever says he has no sin, speaks not the truth, but falsehood.

“VIII. Whoever says, that in the Lord's prayer, saints say, *Forgive us our debts*, not as though they said it for themselves, for this petition is not now necessary for them, but for others among their people who are sinners, and therefore each one of the saints does not say, *Forgive me my debts*, but, *Forgive us our debts*; so that the just is understood to ask this for others rather than for himself: let him be anathema. For the apostle James was holy and just when he said, In many things, *we all offend*. For why was it added, *all*, unless that this sentiment might agree with the psalm, where it is said, Enter not into judgment with *thy servant*, for in thy sight *no one living* shall be justified? And in the prayer of the most wise Solomon, it is said, There is *not a man* that sinneth not; and in the book of Job, He marketh in the hand of *every man*, that *every man* may know his infirmity. Hence even the holy and righteous Daniel, when in prayer he says, in the plural, *We have sinned, we have*



done iniquity, &c.—lest it should be supposed, when he truly and humbly confesses these things, that he said them, (as some now think,) not of his own, but rather of his people's sins,—afterward said, *While I was praying, and confessing my sin* and the sin of my people to the Lord our God. He would not say, *our sin*; but mentioned the sins of his people and his own, because, as a prophet, he foresaw there would be those who so badly understand.

“IX. Whoever will have those words of the Lord's prayer, *Forgive us our debts*, to be so spoken by saints as if they were not humbly and truly said, let him be anathema. For who would endure one praying and lying, not to men, but to God himself; who, with his lips, says, he wishes to be forgiven, and, in his heart, says, he has no debts to be forgiven!”\*

These canons show clearly not only the state of the question at issue, but the course of argumentation pursued by each party. Upon the canons the learned professor makes the following remarks:—“Such are the canons established against the Pelagians at this ‘plenary council.’ On close examination, we see it follows from them, and particularly from the seventh, eighth, and ninth canons, that even those were condemned who maintained that there were men who, by God's aid, had led a life free from sin. Augustine himself, in his earliest writings against the Pelagians, (*De Pec. Mer.* ii, 6; *De Spir. et Lit.* 1,) had granted, nay, even defended, the position, (taken in the abstract, as the Pelagians took it,) that, by God's grace, man *can* be without sin. And though he did not himself believe, that any one *is* without sin in this life, (*De Pec. Mer.* ii, 7,) still he did not regard this as a dangerous opinion, provided only that one does not believe

\* Historical Presentation, pp. 172-174.

we can attain it by our own power. De Spir. et Lit. 2; De Nat. et Gr. 60. 'I know this is the opinion of some,' (viz., that there have been, or are, men without sin,) 'whose opinion in this matter I dare not censure, though I cannot defend it.' De Perf. Just. Hom. 21. In the letter of the five bishops to Innocent, as well as in several of the early pieces of Augustine, this position was left doubtful, or at least pronounced a sufferable error, (*tolerabiliter in eo quisque falliter.*) Even Ambrose had held to it, in a certain sense. And in his book 'On the Acts of Pelagius,' c. 30, written soon after, Augustine numbers this question, both in the abstract and in the concrete, among those which are not to be denied as though already decided in opposition to the heretics, but to be kindly discussed among the Catholics. But, after this synod, (in C. d. Epp. Pel. iv, c. 10,) he represents this opinion as a dangerous and detestable error. He does not, however, here present it in the abstract sense in which the Pelagians really held it, but as if they maintained that there were and had been righteous men who, in this life, had no sin. And from this time onward, as appears from C. Jul. iv, 3, he could not endure the doctrine of man's ability to be without sin."\*

It should be carefully considered that the perfection for which Pelagius contended was a *legal perfection*—*perfect conformity to the demands of the law of innocence*. It also appears that he entertained the notion that "the grace of God is given according to our merits"—that "the merit of good-will precedes grace." He says: "When man is divinely aided, he is aided for the purpose of attaining perfection.—The nature of man is good which deserves the aid of such grace."†

\* Historical Presentation, p. 174.

† Ibid., pp. 189, 190.

Here is a specific statement from authentic sources of the Pelagian system. But a slight examination of it will convince any unprejudiced mind that the system is but little understood, and that too frequently Pelagianism is charged upon those who are even further from that heresy than those are who bring the charge.

Before I leave the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius, a little more attention should be paid to the theory of the former. It will have been observed, that he sometimes denies, and at other times admits, that *men can live without sin*. And hence both those who assert and those who deny the doctrine of perfection often quote him as authority. The learned professor who has furnished the principal part of my materials upon the Pelagian controversy, advertises us of a change in the opinions of Augustine, as to the possibility of keeping the law, after the council of Carthage. But the fact is, that, so early as this period, the distinction between *mortal* and *venial* sins, which occupies so prominent a place in Romish theology, had obtained. And Augustine—the great, the *orthodox* Augustine—held this miserable phantom to be a catholic verity. And though a man might avoid all mortal sin, venial sins were absolutely unavoidable—the holiest men often fell into them.

Du Pin gives us the following abstract of the views of Augustine upon the subject:—"We shall never perfectly accomplish the precept of loving God in this life, because we shall never love him so perfectly as in the next: and though, through God's grace, a man may absolutely avoid all sin in this life; yet it never did, nor shall ever happen, that a mere man (excepting the blessed Virgin, of whom St. Augustine would not have us to speak, when sin is mentioned) passed through this life without sin: for this reason, the most

righteous say daily, *Lord, remit us our debts*; that is, *our sins*; but these are not mortal sins, which bereave the soul of righteousness and holiness; they are venial and daily sins, which are indeed against God's law, but do not utterly destroy charity.”\*

A passage from Augustine, if possible, more fully to the point, is given by Professor Emerson, the translator of the “*Historical Presentation*,” as follows:—

“After quoting from Ambrose, Augustine thus continues:—‘For how is sin dead, when it works many things in us while we struggle against it? Many what? unless they be those foolish and noxious things, which plunge those that yield to them in destruction and perdition; to endure, by all means, and not to comply with which, is the contest, is the conflict, is the battle. The battle of what? unless of good and evil, not of nature against nature, but of nature against the vice, now dead, but yet to be buried, that is, entirely cured? How, then, do we say, that this sin is dead by baptism, as this man [Ambrose] also says, and how do we confess that it abides in our members, and, while we struggle against it, produces many desires, which we resist by not consenting, as he also confesses; unless that it is dead in respect to that guilt by which it held us, and rebels, though dead, till cured by the perfection of sepulture? Although now it is not called sin in the sense of making us guilty, but because it was produced by the guilt of the first man, and because, by rebelling, it strives to draw us into guilt, if the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Saviour do not so aid us, that even dead sin should not so rebel as, by conquering, to revive and reign. Labouring in this war as long as human life is a trial on earth, it is not on this account that we are not without

\* *History of Ecclesiastical Writers*, vol. iii, p. 205.

it, viz., that this, which in this sense is called sin, warring against the law of the mind, works in the members, even while we do not consent to it in unlawful things; (for, as far as respects us, we should always be without sin, until the evil were cured, if we were never to consent to evil;) but in whatever things, by its rebelling, we are still, though not fatally, yet venially conquered, in these we contract that for which we are daily to say, Forgive us our debts. Sicut conjuges quando modum generationi necessarium, causa solius voluptatis, excedunt; sicut continentes quando in talibus cogitationibus cum aliqua delectatione remorantur, non quidem decernentes flagitium, sed intentionem mentis, non sicut oportet, ne illo incidat, inde avertentes, aut si incideret inde rapientes. Respecting this law of sin, which law is, in another sense, (alio modo,) even called sin, which law wars against the law of the mind, and concerning which the blessed Ambrose has said many things, testify the saints Cyprian, Hilary, Gregory, and very many others.' C. Jul. ii, 9, 10."\*

Many there are who quote St. Augustine as the standard of primitive orthodoxy upon the subject of perfection, who, I suppose, would not wish to be understood as holding that the remains of indwelling sin in believers "is not called sin in the sense of making us guilty"—that they "are not *mortal* sins which bereave the soul of righteousness and holiness," but "are *venial* sins." Thanks to Providence, that, though too many of the errors of this father have been received among Protestants, this one, of making some sins *venial*, has been generally condemned.

Upon this notion of *venial sins*, and the doctrine of a *natural ability* in man perfectly to keep God's holy

\* Historical Presentation, pp. 175, 176.



law; and the *merit of good works* held by Pelagius, was finally built the Romish doctrine of works of supererogation, and hence the whole fabric of superstitious observances which constitute so great a part of the Romish religion.

The council of Trent says, "If any man say, that the precepts and commandments of God unto a man justified, and in the state of grace, are impossible to be kept, let him be accursed."\* "They [the Romanists] teach that it is not only possible for men to keep the law of God in this life, but to do more than is prescribed or commanded, and that men of their abundance may allot unto others such works of supererogation."†

"This they say is the very foundation of the monastical life, which is the most perfect estate and calling of Christians: for they perform more than Christ hath commanded, not only his precepts but even his counsels also; which they say, do much differ; for the precepts are enjoined to all Christians, and to leave a precept undone, is sinne; but the evangelical councils are given only to those that are perfect, which they are not bound to keep, neither do they sin in leaving them undone: yet if they observe them, they do merit more and shall have a greater reward; such counsels of perfection are these; to give all we have to the poor; to abstain from eating of flesh, to vow chastitie, and such like: Bellarm., cap. 7; Rhemist Anot., Matt. xix, sec. 9."‡

The sturdy old champion of the Reformation, Dr. Willet,§ meets this miserable Romish nonsense thus:

\* Council Tridentine, sess. vi, can. 18.

† Rhemist, 1 Cor. ix, sec. 6, ex Tileman, loc. iii, ver. 16. Synopsis Papismi, p. 1020.

‡ Synop. Pap., p. 321.

§ Dr. Willet was a learned Protestant, who wrote many ponderous tomes. He graduated at Cambridge, and after passing through

“We do truly affirm, and according to the Scriptures, that it is impossible for any man to perform the law and commandments of God, much less to fulfil more than is commanded: and, therefore, it is false, that besides the precepts of Christ, there are counsels of perfection, which are, at a man’s choice, to doe or not to doe, for whatsoever is to the glory of God, we are bound to doe. We acknowledge, then, no such evangelical counsels as they imagine.”—*Calvin*.

“Bellarmin distinguisheth: There are, saith he, two kinds of perfections; a less, which consisteth in a full keeping of the law, which is necessary to salvation; such a perfection is commanded. Matt. v. There is a greater perfection, not simply necessary to salvation, but to obtain a more excellent degree of glory, in observing the councils; and this our Saviour meaneth, when he biddeth the young man to sell all he had, to be perfect. Mark x, 21. Bellarm., cap. ix, argum. 5.

“*Contra*. First, there can be no greater perfection than in the absolute fulfilling of the law: for the best perfection in this life is love. 1 John iv, 12, 16, 17. But love is the fulfilling of the law. Rom. xiii, 10. Wherefore that which he calleth the less perfection is the best, seeing it fulfilleth the law. Secondly, the perfection spoken of Matt. v, 48 is the best perfection, to be perfect as God is perfect: for what greater perfection can there be, than to be perfect according to

various trying changes, such as were common in the age in which he lived to all who took the liberty to think for themselves, he died A. D. 1612.

His Synopsis Papismi is a folio, of thirteen hundred and fifty-two pages. My copy was printed in 1634, and has written upon the inside of the cover the following commendations:—

“A learned, sound, and comprehensive work.—*E. Bickersteth*.”

“To encounter the Romanists you will be admirably furnished in the Synopsis Papismi of A. Willet.—*Cotton Mather*.”

the example of God? Thirdly, that thing to the which Christ exhorteth the young man, to sell all he had to give to the poor, is not so great a point of perfection as this, whereof Christ speaketh, that we should love our enemies, and so be perfect as God is perfect: for a man may give all his goods to the poor, and yet be without love; (1 Cor. xiii, 3;) but he cannot love his enemies, unless he have love: wherefore this point of perfection seemeth to be greater than the other, and so *Bellarmin* hath lost a good distinction. Wherefore this remaineth a strong place, notwithstanding all his cavils, that exhortation to perfection containeth not only a councill, but a precept also, and commandment.”\*

I will now give another specimen of the controversy between the Romanists and Protestants, from Bishop Jewell. The bishop, in his Apology, says,—“We say also, that every person is borne in sinne, and leadeth his life in sinne: that nobody is able truly to say, his heart is clean: that the most righteous person is but an unprofitable servant: that the law of God is perfect, and requireth of us perfect and full obedience: that we are able by no means to fulfill the law in this worldly life: that there is no one mortal creature which can be justified by his own deserts in God’s sight. And, therefore, that our only succour and refuge is to fly to the mercy of our Father by our Lord Jesus Christ, and assuredly to persuade our minds, that he is the obtainer of forgiveness for our sinnes: and that, by his blood, all our spots of sin be washed clean.”

To this Harding, the famous Romish champion, of Lovain, answers,—“Yee make a sophistical argument, when yee teach, because the law of God requireth of us full obedience, that therefore it cannot be satisfied in this by any means. For when yee say, it

\* Synopsis Papismi, p. 323.

requireth of us full obedience, if ye mean such full obedience as is required only in this life, then conclude yee falsely, that we can by no means satisfy it. But if yee mean such full obedience as is only performed in heaven, then yee conclude well, that we in this life cannot fulfill such perfection, as is required in heaven. But then have yee said nothing to the purpose ! For we know what mark yee shoot at, by your doctrine uttered in other places : your meaning is, that no man in this life is able to fulfill the commandments. We believe, God commandeth nothing impossible to us. Otherwise how could he justly punish for not doing that commandment, which by no means we are able to fulfill ? We are sure that God punisheth no man unjustly, for *Non est apud Dominum Deum nostrum iniquitas* : there is no iniquity in our Lord God."

Bishop Jewell replies :—"All other things being by you touched, M. Harding, I will pass over : thinking it sufficient, to note a few words of the 'possibility and performance of the law,' and so much the more, for that yee seem herein in some part, to renew the *Pelagian* heretics' old condemned error.

"As touching that full and perfect obedience that is required of us by the law, ye answer, *There are sundry sorts of perfection* : namely, that there is *perfection* in children ; *perfection* in men ; *perfection* in angels ; and *perfection* in God. And further ye say, 'that in this life we cannot fulfill such perfection, as is required of the angels of God in heaven.' And this answer ye make, touching the obedience, and performing of the law : as if ye would say, The law of God was given to angels, and is to be performed, not in the earth, but only in heaven ; and, as if God had said to those blessed spirits, 'Thou shalt not kill ; thou shalt not commit adultery ; thou shalt not steal ; thou shalt

not covet,' &c. In your sundrie *perfections* of children, men, angels, and God, I have no skill. The *Apology* meant only of that *perfection* that is required of man. Howbeit, in every kind they say, *Perfectum est cui nihil diest: that thing is perfect that is full and absolute and wanteth nothing.*

“And here, lest ye should deceive yourself by wrong measure, God himself hath showed you, what *perfection* he requireth of man. Thus he saith, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy power; thou shalt not turn neither to the right hand, nor to the left: accursed is he that standeth not in every thing that is written in the law to perform the same.’ And St. James saith, ‘Whoso offendeth in one commandment, is guilty of all.’ And Christ saith, ‘Be ye perfect (not measuring yourselves by your own ability, but) as your Father is perfect which is in heaven.’ And yet hereby he meaneth not the *perfection* that is in God and his angels, but only that *perfection* that is required in man.

“*St. Hierome* saith, the *Pelagian* heretics in old times used the same shifts that you use now. For whereas the Catholic learned fathers said, ‘No man is perfect and void of sin,’ they answered then even in such sort as you do now; no man is *perfect* in such degree of *perfection* as God is *perfect*. *St. Hierome’s* words be these:—‘*They say* (even as you, M. Harding, say) *that in comparison of God, no man is perfect*: as though this were the saying of the Scriptures.’ And therefore he saith unto them, ‘I beseech you, hath God commanded me, that I should be the same that God is? that there should be no difference (in perfection) between me and my Lord the Creator? That I should be above the highness of angels? or that I should have that the angels have



not?" It was in vain, then, M. Harding, thus to borrow the *Pelagians'* weapons, and to make matter of this perfection. For we speak not of angels, but only of men.

"Further, to intreat of the *perfect fulfilling* and *accomplishing of the law*, I mean, so far as the law requireth, the Pelagian heretics herein also said, even as you say, and none otherwise. As *St. Augustine* thereof reporteth thus: 'The Pelagians think themselves caring more, when they say, God would not command that thing that he knoweth a man is not able to do. And who is there that knoweth not this? But, therefore, God commandeth us to do some things that we are not able to do, that we may understand what we ought to crave of him.'

"*St. Hierome* saith unto one of the same Pelagians: 'Ye say, God's commandments be easy: and yet ye are able to show us no man that ever fulfilled them altogether.'

"Therefore again he saith unto them: 'Set not thy face against Heaven, to mock fools' ears with these words, *be, and can be*. For who will grant you that a man can do that thing that no man was ever able to do?'

"Likewise *St. Augustine* saith: 'I said, it is impossible that a man may be without sin, if he want not will, the power of God assisting him: and yet I said, that besides only Christ, in whom all men shall be quickened to life, there was never a man, nor never shall be, who, being in this life, shall have this *perfection*.' *St. Augustine* saith: 'No man can attain to this perfection:' and he speaketh of the *perfection* that is required, not of angels, but of men.

"Ye will say, as the *Pelagians* did, Wherefore, then, doth Christ say, '*Be ye perfect*?' Wherefore doth *St.*

*Paul* say, 'As many of us as be perfect?' &c. Hereto *St. Hierome* answereth thus: 'What then do we think, or what ought we to think, that be not perfect? We ought to confess, that we are imperfect, and that we have not yet gotten, nor taken (that perfection) that is required. This is the true wisdom of a man to know himself to be unperfect. And as I say the perfection of all just men living in the flesh is unperfect.'

"Again he saith: 'They are called just men, not for that they be void of all manner of sin, but for that they are furnished with the greater part of virtues.' So likewise saith *St. Augustine*: 'The virtue that is now in a just man, so far forth is called *perfect*, that it pertaineth to the perfection thereof, both in truth to know, and in humility to confess, that it is unperfect.' And again he saith: 'All the commandments of God are accounted to be done, when that thing that is not done, is forgiven.' To conclude, he saith: 'He hath much profited in this life, that by his profiting, hath learned how far he is from the perfection of righteousness.'

"Yet, nevertheless, we may truly use *St. Hierome's* words, uttered in defence of this same cause: 'Notwithstanding we say thus, yet we flatter not vices: but we follow the authority of the Scriptures, that there is no man without sin. But God hath shut up all things under sin, that he may have mercy of all.' Again he saith: 'It is most certain that every man, yea, although he be grown to perfection, yet needeth the mercie of God: and that he enjoyeth full perfection, not of his own deserving, but of grace.' Even so *St. Augustine* saith: 'Our very righteousness itself is so great in this, that it standeth rather in *forgiveness* of our sins than in perfection of righteousness.'"\*

\* Works of Bishop Jewell, pp. 298-301, fol., 1609.

The intelligent reader of this argument of Jewell will not fail to remark several things:—1. That Bishop Jewell speaks of a *legal perfection*, and not at all of that perfection which consists in a ripeness of the Christian graces. 2. That Harding, with true Jesuitical cunning, avoids saying any thing of the merit of works—or works of supererogation; simply confining himself to the absurdity of holding that a God of justice would require impossibilities. 3. That the bishop makes a more free use of the fathers than of the Scriptures: this he did because he was debating the matter with one who acknowledged the paramount authority of these fathers—giving no sense to the Scriptures but such as had the sanction of what they call *the unanimous consent of the fathers*. 4. That these fathers evidently, after all their zeal against the Pelagian error of perfection, acknowledge—as all, indeed, who reverence the Scriptures are forced to do—a qualified perfection to be predicable of men on earth. We shall see this last fact more fully sustained in the future.

John Fox, the English martyrologist, meets the question with a more clear discrimination of the real point at issue than most of the reformers whose works have come down to our times. He says:—

“Osorio defines righteousness, that ‘it is a state of soul founded on the law of God,’ and that ‘it bears a clear resemblance to the immutability of the divine virtue.’ In like manner also Andradius not much differs from him. ‘Righteousness,’ saith he, ‘is an unmovable equity and government of mind, which measures all its actions and counsels by the law of God.’ And the same again presently: ‘Righteousness is a habit of mind fashioned by the divine law, to obey that divine law and will, as it persuades to perform the offices of every virtue,’ &c.

“Herein is your error, that whereas there is a two-fold and diverse sort of righteousness set before us in Scripture, the one which is of the law, and peculiar to God; the other which is of faith, and peculiar to us; you are so taken up in defining the one, that you do not at all touch upon the other, about which the chief matter of controversy is here. And so you proceed in setting forth the perfect excellency of the divine righteousness, and justly so indeed to be accounted of, that in the mean while you leave no righteousness to man at all. For what righteousness shall man have, if righteousness be so strictly defined, that it cannot consist but of works of perfect righteousness, nor be communicated unless to perfect men?

“For now, seeing no men are so perfect in this world but that this miserable depravation of our nature is far from this exactness, and there is none, as Augustine witnesses, so long as he is in this life, who pretends himself to be just in the sight of God—by necessary consequence it follows, that either there is no righteousness of ours at all in this life, or it must be another than that which your definition thus circumscribes to us; for thus you define it: ‘That it is an excellent state of mind, conformed by the divine law, founded upon divine prescription, free from all wickedness, and coming near in its resemblance to the divine nature.’ And indeed in that state we were created in the beginning. But we have lost it long since, neither are we yet perfectly restored, but we shall be restored at length by the divine power and bounty of Christ, on the day that this our corruption shall put on incorruption, and this mortal body shall rise again to immortality. In which state of resurrection we believe with Augustine that we shall fulfil righteousness, that is, we shall have complete righteousness. ‘In comparison

of that resurrection,' saith he, 'the whole life that we now live is but dung.'"

"Therefore, this is not the controversy, whether the regenerate, by the help of the grace of God, can do any thing in this life piously and commendably : neither is this the controversy, whether the absolute grace of God in the regenerate is able to perform this, that their works should be free of all sin : but whether the grace of God in this flesh, furnishes any of the regenerate with so great a power of perfecting righteousness, that any work of theirs is so complete and perfect, if it be examined according to the rule of the divine law, that it needs no pardon or mediator. But if it needs mercy, then it is necessarily joined with pollution and sin, so that now the praise belongs to the Mediator and not to man ; to imputation, not to action ; to grace, not to merit ; to faith, not to works ; that God accepts of the works of the regenerate and most holy men. Neither is the rectitude of our good things any thing else but the forgiveness of God, and the remission of his just severity. Whence the apostle rightly concludes, that those who are of the works of the law, not speaking of evil works, but the most perfect works, are under the curse ; and upon this account it is true, which Luther says, that a righteous man sins in every good work. Not that the work itself, being appointed by the law of God, is a sin ; but because, according to the saying of Augustine, whatsoever is less than it ought to be, is faulty. From whence it appears evident, that in this life there is no work so perfect but something is wanting ; that is, there is sin in it, if it be judged according to the strict rigour of the law."\*

\* These paragraphs are copied from a work entitled "Of Free Justification by Christ," &c.: a portion of Fox's Works. London: printed for the Religious Tract Society, constituting one volume of a uniform set of the English Reformers. See pp. 180, 181 ; 223, 224.



In the investigation of the history of religious controversy, nothing seems so obvious as the fact that one extreme begets another. Augustine, in his heat in opposing the Pelagian error of man's natural purity, and his ability perfectly to keep the law, falls into the opposite error, of the necessary or certain continuance of concupiscence in the hearts of the best men through life. Several of the reformers, in opposing the Romish doctrine of legal perfection and the merit of good works, more confidently than Augustine himself, maintained the same position, with the modifications, that God willed this for the promotion of the humility, faith, and patience of the saints; and that death is the instrument of their final deliverance from the body of sin.

Luther says :—"The time of the law is when the law exerciseth me, tormenteth me with heaviness of heart, oppresseth me, bringeth me to the knowledge of sin, and increaseth the same. Here the law is in his true use and perfect work : which a Christian oftentimes feeleth as long as he liveth.—This battle doth every Christian feel. To speak of myself, there are many hours in the which I chide and contend with God, and impatiently resist him. The wrath and judgment of God displeaseth me; and again, my impatience, my murmuring, and such like sins, do displease him. And this is the time of the law, under the which a Christian man continually liveth, as touching the flesh. Wherefore, if we could perfectly apprehend Christ, which hath abolished the law by his death, and hath reconciled us unto his Father, that schoolmaster should have no power over us at all. But the law of the members, rebelling against the law of the mind, letteth [hindereth] us, that we cannot perfectly lay hold upon Christ. The lack, therefore, is not in Christ, but

in us, which have not yet put off this flesh, to which sin continually cleaveth, as long as we live.”\*

*Hooper* says :—“ The Father of heaven, for the sake of Christ, not only remits the sins wrought willingly against the word of God, but also the imperfection and natural concupiscence which remains in every man, as long as the nature of man is mortal.”†

*Cranmer*, speaking of the office of the Holy Ghost in our sanctification, says :—“ And this work he works continually in us, and ceases not till he has wrought in our hearts a perfect faith and a perfect charity, and until sin and all evil desires are at length wholly purged out of us *by the death of the body*. And then we shall be perfect in all holiness, and delivered from all sin and adversity, and be heirs of our Father’s kingdom, and his true and most dearly beloved children.”‡

That this doctrine of the necessary continuance of indwelling sin until *death* comes to our relief should have been held by our reformers, who had but just emerged from the gross darkness of Popery, and were so incessantly engaged in opposing the doctrine of the *merit of works*, is not surprising. And that they themselves should not have attained to the full liberty of the gospel is no strange thing. Nor is it an argument of the least weight in the case in hand. But that so many of the reformed churches should have continued to the present day upon the same ground is not a little mysterious. Luther’s doctrine of consubstantiation, and Calvin’s doctrine of a limited atonement, have indeed measurably faded away before the light of truth, and are now scarcely known. But the doctrine of “*sinful*

\* Commentary on Galatians, chap. iii, ver. 23, 25.

† British Reformers—Writings of John Hooper, p. 62.

‡ British Reformers—Writings of Rev. Dr. Thomas Cranmer, pp. 178, 179.

*imperfection and a death purgatory,”* as it is styled by Mr. Fletcher, still has an abundance of pious and learned advocates in the churches.

The Westminster divines say :—“No man is able, either of himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.”\* This article expresses the doctrine of the reformed churches of the continent of Europe, the kirk of Scotland, and the Presbyterian churches in England and America. If by “commandments” be meant the law of innocence, or, by *keeping* them, *Adamic purity*, the statement is well founded, though some of the passages by which it is sustained do not prove it. And in that case it is clearly against those who acknowledge the *attainableness* of such a state of perfection, their denial of the fact that any do actually attain to it notwithstanding. But if by the *commandments* be meant the evangelical law, I demur, and ask for the proof. The passages quoted by the reverend authors, as I shall show upon a future occasion, are nothing to their purpose ; if they were, they would prove that our Lord Jesus Christ had instituted an impracticable religion. It must not be overlooked that this article follows the discussion of the decalogue, or ten commandments. Now, to look at the matter abstractly, who is prepared to admit that Christians—the best Christians—must “daily break” the ten commandments “in thought, word, and deed,” notwithstanding “any grace received?” But my object is not here to discuss the merits of this question. The same views with those of the Westminster divines were sustained by the synod of Dort, and acceded to by all the reformed churches of the continent, excepting the Remonstrants.

\* Larger Catechism, quest. 149.

## LECTURE VI.

## CONTROVERSIES—CONTINUED.

“Prove all things : hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thess. v, 21.

THE thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England were designed to constitute an effectual barrier against the corruptions of the Romish communion, and consequently many of these articles are simply a denial of leading doctrines of that communion. The fifteenth article is entitled, “Of Christ alone without sin.” Here, after asserting the spotless purity of Christ, the article proceeds:—“But all we the rest (although baptized and born again in Christ) yet offend in many things ; and if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

Bishop Burnet, after an exposition of this article, and offering some doubtful opinions with regard to the “design in the contexture of Scripture to represent to us some of the failings of the best men,” concludes thus :—

“Yet this is not to be abused by any to be an encouragement to live in sin ; for we may carry this purity and perfection certainly very far, by the grace of God. In every sin that we commit, we do plainly perceive that we do it with so much freedom, that we might not have done it : here is still just matter for humiliation and repentance. By this doctrine our Church intends only to repress the pride of vain-glorious and hypocritical men, and to strike at the root of that filthy merchandise that has been brought into the house of God,

under the pretence of perfection, and even the over-doing or supererogating, of the saints.”\*

Philip Melancthon, the coadjutor of Luther in the great and glorious Reformation from Popery, gives us the following exposition of the subject:—

“In fine, there remains even in the regenerate a mass of sin which transcends the comprehension of man; nor do we regard that as a light saying, ‘Who can understand his errors?’ It would be tedious to enumerate the various kinds of sin which remain in the saints; but Paul seems to sum them up, Rom. vii, where he speaks of our inward opposition to all the commands. But proud hypocrites understand not these secret sins; nay, the monks teach that doubts concerning Providence and the wrath and mercy of God, and that corrupt affections, unless we yield to them our consent, are not sinful. Nor is their error merely verbal; it is substantial; they deny that these vices are repugnant to the divine law. This is false and insulting to the law of God; it brings darkness upon the doctrine of grace and of justification by faith, and establishes a deceptive persuasion that the righteous can satisfy the law of God.”—“But why prolong discussion? The whole Scripture, the whole church, proclaim that the law is not satisfied. Our imperfect fulfilment of the law, therefore, is not pleasing in itself, but only on account of faith in Christ. Irrespective of this, the law always accuses us; for who sufficiently loves and fears God? Who sustains with sufficient patience the afflictions which God sends? Who does not frequently doubt, whether human affairs are not governed by chance, rather than by the counsel of God? Who does not often doubt whether God hears prayer? Who is not often angry that wicked men

\* Exposition of the XXXIX Articles.



prosper more than the righteous, and that the righteous are oppressed by the wicked? Who completely fulfils his own vocation? Who loves his neighbour as himself? Who is unmoved by concupiscence? Therefore, says Paul, ‘the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.’ And again, ‘With the mind I serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.’ Here he openly declares that he serves the law of sin.”

I copy this passage from the Christian Review, where it is introduced in the following manner:—

“While, therefore, the council of Trent decided in favour of the attainableness of perfection in the present life, this doctrine was boldly denied by the Augsburg Confession of Faith, prepared by Luther and Melancthon. And Melancthon, in his Apology for this Confession, as well as in his *Loci Theologici*, records his protest and his strong arguments against this doctrine.”\*

The only passage in the Augsburg Confession which has any reference to the subject under discussion is the following:—“They [the reformed churches] condemn the Pelagians, and others, who teach that it is possible, by the sole power of reason, without the aid of the Holy Spirit, to love God above all things, and do his commandments.”†

It is clear that the Augsburg Confession, and its great defender, direct their opposition, not against the Wesleyan theory of evangelical perfection, but the *graceless* theory of Pelagians, and the *legal* system of the Romanists. The expressions of Melancthon upon the subject of the remaining corruptions of “the regenerate” are not a whit stronger than those of Mr. Wesley, which he gives us in his sermon “on Sin in Be-

\* No 26, p. 232. † Art. XVIII.

lievers." The difference seems to be that Mr. Wesley makes a *general*, and Melancthon a *universal* application of his doctrine to the actual state of Christians.

But in addition to their Confession of Faith, the reformers also submitted to the Diet a list of corruptions which had crept into the Roman Church, and which they had corrected. Chap. vi. is "of monastic vows;" and contains the following distinct and explicit admission of the doctrine of perfection:—"Those therefore who would be justified by their vows, have abandoned the grace of God through Christ; for they rob Christ of his glory, who alone can justify us, and transfer this glory to their vows and monastic life. It is moreover a corruption of the divine law and of true worship, to hold up the monastic life to the people as the only perfect one. For Christian perfection consists in this, that we love and fear God with all our heart, and yet combine with it sincere reliance and faith in him through Christ: that it is our privilege and duty to supplicate the throne of grace for such things as we need in all our trials, and in our respective callings; and to give diligence in the performance of good works. It is in this that true perfection consists, and the true worship of God, but not in begging, or in a black or a white cap."\*

From this it appears most clearly that the sober views which were adopted by Mr. Wesley upon the subject of Christian perfection were far from having been condemned by the reformers. The true Wesleyan theory is here, in general terms, explicitly admitted, at the same time that the Romish errors upon the subject are condemned. It is not however pretended that the reformers did not, in their opposition to the

\* See Appendix to Burnet on the XXXIX Articles, published by D. Appleton & Co., p. 539.

Pelagian and Romish errors, fall into some extreme views upon the other hand. This we have previously shown to be the fact. Sometimes, as in the article above quoted, they were wise enough to hit the happy medium. When our opponents have occasion to use the authority of the reformers upon this subject, if they would correctly exhibit the system these good men opposed, they would neither do them nor us injustice.

I will next present the views of two learned Calvinistic divines, who flourished in the seventeenth century. What they admit, and what they deny and controvert, will show the state of the controversy in their time.

The following is translated from Turretin, *De Perfectione Sanctificationis*, vol. ii, pp. 759, 760 :—

“The same question has been brought up anew in this age by the Neo-Pelagians, the Papists, the Socinians, and the Anabaptists, who have declared that the law can be perfectly fulfilled by the regenerate, that they might open a way for the merit of works. Hence there has arisen among the Papists themselves, between the Jansenists and Jesuits, no inconsiderable strife in reference to this point; thus one of the five famous propositions of Jansen, condemned by Innocent X., was this: ‘To righteous persons, though willing and striving, some of the precepts of God are impossible, according to the present strength which they have, and they lack that grace by which these precepts could become possible.’ Though we might indeed discuss the imperfection of sanctification, and the impossibility of fulfilling the law, as distinct questions, yet, since they tend to the same result, and are proved by the same arguments, we will here consider them together.

“That the state of the question may be rightly un-

derstood, it is to be observed, 1st. That the question is not concerning the perfection of sincerity, which consists in this, that one may serve God with a heart unstained and undivided. For we think that this ought to be found in true believers, as it is attributed to Job, (Job i, 1,) where he is said to have been ‘perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.’ And Hezekiah lays claim to this in Isa. xxxviii, 3.

2d. It is not concerning a perfection in extent, one that is subjective in respect to the whole man, who ought to be wholly sanctified in body as well as in soul and spirit, (1 Thess. v, 23,) and objective in respect to the whole law in all its commands. For we believe that this also is required of the believer, as it is declared of Zacharias and Elisabeth, Luke i, 6.

3d. It is not concerning comparative perfection, which is attributed to some believers who were more advanced than others; in which sense the believers of the New Testament are called perfect, (τελειοι, adults,) 1 Cor. ii, 6, in comparison with those of the Old Testament, who are called children, (νηπιοι,) Gal. iv, 1. And this epithet is applied to Christian believers who had made greater attainments than others in faith and piety, and who had ‘their senses exercised to discern both good and evil’ more than others who as yet have need of milk, and are concerned with the elements of religion, who are referred to in Phil. iii, 15, and Heb. v, 13.

4th. It is not concerning evangelical perfection, which covers our imperfections with the garment of grace and the forbearance of the Father, (ἐπιεικεια, *paternâ*,) since all those things which have been done are not imputed, while those which have not been done are pardoned, that is, covered by the righteousness of Christ, in whom we are said to be perfect. Col. ii, 10. For all these kinds of perfection we acknowledge.

But we are to inquire in reference to a legal perfection, absolute in every respect, so that nothing is wanting to it, as well in degree as in extent.

“Nor is the question concerning absolute and entire impossibility, in accordance with which it is said that any thing cannot be done, either because it involves a contradiction, or because it is at variance with the nature of God, or because man is not competent for its performance under any condition. For in this sense we do not say that the commands of God are impossible to man; because they were possible to man in his natural state, and they would be possible to a regenerate man in the state of grace, if God would give such a measure of grace as would take away all the corruption of the heart; and they will be possible in the glorified state. But it is concerning impossibility considered relatively in view of our condition, and the order established by God, who, although he could have done it, was yet unwilling to grant us perfection of sanctification here for very important reasons; that so there might be a distinction between the condition of our pilgrimage and of the heavenly country, of the church militant and of the church triumphant, and that thus a desire for holiness might be excited in a higher degree, and we might know that we must not be indolent in the work of salvation, since there is always something to be done, and enemies are never wanting with whom we must contend.

“The question is not, whether the works of the righteous are truly good, which our opponents improperly urge in this place, because this belongs to another question, that is, concerning the truth of good works, in the consideration of which it will be shown in what sense the works of believers are truly good, and yet may be called sins. But it is asked, whether they are



so perfect that they answer the demands of the law, and it can find nothing in them to reprehend?

“The question then comes to this, whether the regenerate believer can so promote his own sanctification, that he may attain to perfection, not only in extent, but in degree, and could fulfil the law, not only sufficiently (*επιεικως*) and evangelically, but completely (*ἀκριβως*) and legally, and so abundantly satisfy the divine law, as to live not only without guilt, but even without sin, and so that the law may have nothing which it can accuse and condemn if God should come into judgment with him? Our opponents support the affirmative, we the negative.”\*

Nearly to the same purpose are the views of Witsius:

“It cannot, indeed, be denied that sometimes the Scripture makes mention of some who are said to be *perfect* even in this life. But it is to be observed that the term *perfection* is not always used in the same sense. For, 1st. There is a perfection of *sincerity*, consisting in this, that a man serves God with an unfeigned heart, without any reigning hypocrisy. In this sense it is said of Job that he was ‘תם וישר’, *perfect* and *upright*, and one that feared God and eschewed evil,’ Job i, 1. In the same sense Hezekiah protests that he had walked before God ‘in truth, and with a *perfect* heart, and done what was good in his eyes,’ Isa. xxxviii, 3. 2dly. There is a perfection of *parts*; and that both *subjective*, with respect to the whole man, in so far as he is ‘sanctified wholly, in spirit, soul, and body,’ 1 Thess. v, 23, and *objective*, with respect to the whole law, when all and every one of the duties

\* Translated from Turretin’s *Institutio Theologiæ Elencticæ* Locus Decimus Septimus Quæstio II. De Perfectione Sanctificationis, An Sanctificatio sit ita perfecta in hac vitâ, ut Fideles legem absolute implere possint? Neg. contra Pontif. et Socin.

prescribed by God are observed without exception. Of this David was speaking, Psa. cxix, 128, 'I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.' And it is said of Zacharias and Elisabeth, Luke i, 6, that they 'walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.' 3dly. There is a *comparative* perfection ascribed to those who are advanced in knowledge, faith, and sanctification, in comparison of those who are still infants and untaught; in this manner John distinguishes *little children, young men, and fathers*, 1 John ii, 12, 13. In that sense Paul speaks of the *perfect*, 1 Cor. ii, 6, and Phil. iii, 15. 4thly. There is also an *evangelical* perfection, or with a veil or covering of grace, according to which those persons are looked upon as perfect who sincerely endeavour after perfection, God, for the sake of Christ, graciously accepting the attempts of a ready mind, and accounting every thing to be done, because what is not done is forgiven. The apostle speaks of this, 2 Cor. viii, 12: 'For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.' Thus 'we are complete in Christ,' Col. ii, 10, his most perfect righteousness covering all our defects. However, this is to be understood in a proper manner; for the judgment of God is always according to truth: he so judges of us and our actions as they are; and, seeing we ourselves and our actions are imperfect, he cannot but judge us to be so. This is what we should say agreeable to Scripture, that God, on account of the most perfect obedience of Christ, graciously accepts the sincerity of his people, nor less bountifully rewards them than if their holiness was in every respect complete. 5thly, and lastly. There is also a perfection of *degrees*, by which a person performs all the commands

of God, with the full exertion of all his powers, without the least defect, having rooted up every depraved lust. This is what the law of God requires. And this is that perfection which we deny the saints to have in this life, though we willingly allow them all the other kinds above mentioned.”\*

Here the positions of the opponents of the doctrines maintained by Anabaptists, Neo-Pelagians, &c., on the subject of perfection, are very systematically and perspicuously stated. Several points, here fully set forth, it will be important to notice.

1. It is maintained that the term perfection is used in various senses. Now, those who would fain have us understand that they follow these great doctors upon the subject of perfection, seem to affix to the term but one single idea, and that is, the idea of *absoluteness*—implying what these authors call “the perfection of *degrees*.”

2. In their detail of the several species of perfection which they admit, they not only yield the point that the Scriptures teach the doctrine, but do also embrace every thing that we mean by Christian or evangelical perfection. See particularly the second division of the subject by Turretin.

3. These writers hold to the doctrine of *imputed perfection*:—that by which all the Christian’s corruptions are hid “with the veil or covering of grace.” As Calvin says: “Where remission of sins has been previously received, and good works which succeed are estimated far beyond their intrinsic merits; for all their imperfections are covered by the perfection of Christ, and all their blemishes are removed by his purity, that they may not be scrutinized by the divine judgment.”†

\* Economy of the Covenants, vol. ii, pp. 59, 60, chap. ii, sec. 125.

† Calvin’s Institutes, book iii, chap. xvii, sec. viii.

This species of perfection, which consists in covering the impurities and unrighteousness of the elect with the perfect righteousness of Christ, is not generally maintained by our opponents of the present day.

4. The perfection which these writers deny to be predicable of man is "the perfection of degrees," by which they mean a "perfection not only in extent, but in degree," so that the individual who is the subject of it "could fulfil the law, not only sufficiently, and evangelically, but completely and legally, and so abundantly satisfy the divine law—that it may have nothing which it can accuse and condemn if God should come into judgment with him."

I need not say that this is not our doctrine. And if the views opposed by these learned theologians are correctly laid at the door of any sects existing in their times, however we may by our opponents be ranked with them, under the general term *perfectionists*, let it now be fully understood that we come infinitely nearer the perfectionism of Turretin and Witsius (excepting their notion of *imputed perfection*) than that of those they so vehemently oppose.

Perhaps it may be necessary here to notice the controversy upon the subject of perfection in the Romish Church between the Jansenists and the Jesuits. This could be well dispensed with, as we have as little fellowship for the notions of one party as we have for those of the other, were it not for the fact that Jansenius is sometimes quoted by our opponents as a model of orthodoxy, and our views represented as corresponding with those of the true disciples of Loyola. As a specimen of the use made of this controversy by a certain class of writers, I give the following from the *Christian Review*:—

"This doctrine seems to have been taken under the

special patronage of the followers of Loyola, the most virulent and indefatigable enemies of the Reformation. Bellarmin, one of the purest and most enlightened of his order, did not hesitate to declare, that by our own merits we might not only satisfy the law, but make God our debtor. His language is, '*Non ex sola promissione sed etiam ex opere nostro, Deus efficitur debitor,*' God is made our debtor, not merely by his own promise, but even by our works. But there were a few, who could not receive a sentiment so gross and impious. Jansenius, the founder of the order which bore his name, and a bold defender of the sentiments of Augustine, maintained that it was impossible for believers to fulfil, in every particular, the divine law, since it was not given to them to enjoy in the present life the requisite degree of grace. This was one of the articles of his faith, for which he suffered the anathema of Pope Innocent X. But in this he was subsequently sustained by some of the most pious and enlightened minds in the Catholic Church; among whom were the polished and eloquent scholars of Port Royal, who constituted at once the lights and ornaments of their age. It may be recollected, also, that this was one of the points in dispute between the Jansenists and the Jesuits, to which Pascal alludes in his Provincial Letters, where he raises his powerful pen to make the whole Jesuit fraternity the scorn and laughing-stock of Europe."\*

This is altogether a one-sided view of the matter. To give the reader a correct understanding of this great conflict, I shall now insert Mr. Wesley's sketch, which, for brevity and completeness, exceeds any thing I have at hand.

"The flame of controversy, which seemed extin-

\* No. for June, 1842.



guished, broke out again with new violence in the year 1640, and formed a kind of schism in the Church of Rome, which involved it in great perplexity. The occasion of these new troubles was the publication of a book, entitled, *Augustinus*, composed by Cornelius Jansenius, bishop of Ypres, and published after the death of the author. In this book, the doctrine of Augustine concerning man's *natural corruption* and the *nature* and *efficacy* of that *divine grace*, which alone can efface this unhappy stain, is unfolded at large, and illustrated, for the most part, in Augustine's own words. No incident could be more unfavourable to the cause of the Jesuits, and the progress of their religious system, than the publication of this book; and they could scarcely consider it in any other light, than as a tacit refutation of their opinions concerning *human liberty* and *divine grace*. And, accordingly, they not only drew their pens against this famous book, but also used their most zealous endeavours to obtain a public condemnation of it from Rome. Their endeavours were not unsuccessful. The Roman inquisitors began the opposition by prohibiting the perusal of it, in the year 1641; and in 1642, Urban VIII. condemned it by a solemn bull, as infected with several errors.

“There were, nevertheless, places, even within the bounds of the Romish Church, where this bull was not in the least respected. The doctors of Lovain, in particular, opposed the condemnation of Jansenius; and hence arose a warm contest in the Belgic provinces. But it was not confined within such narrow limits; it reached the neighbouring countries, and broke out, with peculiar vehemence, in France, where the abbot of St. Cyran, a man of an elegant genius, and equally distinguished by the extent of his learning, the lustre

of his piety, and the sanctity of his manners, had procured Augustine many zealous followers.

“Urban VIII., and, after him, Innocent X., were bent on appeasing these dangerous tumults, in the same manner as the popes had suppressed the controversies excited by the Dominicans. But the vivacity, and restless spirit of the French doctors, disconcerted the measures of the pontiffs. The opposers of the doctrine of Augustine selected *five propositions* out of the work of Jansenius, which appeared to them erroneous in their nature, and pernicious in their tendency; and employed their most zealous endeavours at the court of Rome to have these propositions condemned. And the pontiff did condemn them by a public bull, on the 31st of May, 1653. These propositions were,—

“1. That ‘there are divine precepts, which good men, notwithstanding their desire to observe them, are, nevertheless, absolutely unable to obey; nor has God given them that measure of grace that is essentially necessary to render them capable of such obedience.’

“2. That ‘no person, in this corrupt state of nature, can resist the influence of divine grace.’

“3. That, ‘in order to render human actions meritorious, it is not requisite that they be exempt from *necessity*, but only that they be free from *constraint*.’

“4. That ‘the Semi-Pelagians err grievously in maintaining, that the human will is endowed with the power of either receiving or resisting preventing grace.’

“5. That ‘whosoever affirms, that Jesus Christ made expiation, by his sufferings and death, for the sins of all mankind, is a Semi-Pelagian.’

“Of these propositions the pontiff declared the first four only *heretical*; but the fifth *rash, impious, and injurious* to the supreme Being.

“This sentence of the supreme ecclesiastical judge

was indeed painful to the Jansenists, but did not satisfy their adversaries, because Jansenius was not named in the bull, nor did the pontiff declare that the five propositions were maintained in his book. But they at length engaged Alexander VII., the successor of Innocent, to declare, by a solemn bull, issued out in the year 1656, that the five propositions were the tenets of Jansenius, and were contained in his book. Nay, in the year 1665, he sent into France the form of a declaration, that was to be subscribed by all those who aspired after any preferment in the church, in which it was affirmed, that the five propositions were to be found in the book of Jansenius, in the same sense in which they had been condemned by the church. This declaration produced the most deplorable tumults. It was immediately opposed by the Jansenists, who maintained, that, in *matters of fact*, the pope was *fallible*, especially when his decisions were not confirmed by a general council; and, of consequence, that it was neither obligatory nor necessary to subscribe this declaration. The Jesuits, on the contrary, asserted openly, in the face of the Gallican church, that faith in the papal decisions relating to matter of *fact*, had no less the characters of a *divine faith*, than when these decisions related merely to matters of doctrine. All the Jansenists were not equally resolute. Some of them declared, that they would neither subscribe nor reject the form in question, but show their veneration for the authority of the pope by observing a profound silence. Others professed themselves ready to subscribe it, on condition of being allowed to explain the sense in which they understood it. Others employed a variety of methods and stratagems to elude the force of it. But nothing of this kind was sufficient to satisfy the Jesuits; nothing less than the entire ruin of the Jan-

senists could appease their fury. Such, therefore, as made the least opposition to the declaration were cast into prison, or sent into exile, or involved in some other species of persecution.

“ The lenity or prudence of Clement suspended, for a while, the calamities of those who had sacrificed their liberty and their fortunes to their zeal for the doctrine of Augustine. This change, which happened in the year 1669, was occasioned by the fortitude of the bishops of Angers, Beauvais, Pamiers, and Alet, who gloriously refused to subscribe the declaration. They did not indeed stand alone in the breach; for when the court of Rome began to menace, nineteen bishops more arose with a noble intrepidity, and adopted their cause, in solemn remonstrances, addressed both to the king of France and the Roman pontiff. These resolute protesters were joined by Anne Genevieve de Bourbon, dutchess of Longueville, a heroine of the first rank both in birth and magnanimity, who, having renounced the pleasures of the world, espoused, with a devout ardour, the cause of the Jansenists, and earnestly implored the clemency of the pontiff in their behalf. Moved by these entreaties, and by other considerations, Clement IX. became so indulgent as to accept of a conditional subscription to the famous declaration. This was no sooner made public, than the Jansenists began to come forth from their lurking places, to return from their voluntary exile, and to enjoy their former tranquillity and freedom. But the death of the dutchess of Longueville, which happened in the year 1679, deprived the Jansenists of their principal support. From that time they were pursued with the same malignity that they had before experienced. Some of them avoided the rising storm by a voluntary exile; others sustained it with invincible fortitude;

others escaped its violence, as well as they could, by dexterity and artifice. Anthony Arnaud, who was the head of the party, fled into Holland in the year 1679; and, in this retreat, he not only escaped the fury of his enemies, but made the Jesuits feel the weight of his talents and the extent of his influence. For the eloquence and sagacity of this great man gave him such an ascendant in the Netherlands, that the greatest part of the churches there embraced his opinions, and adopted his cause; the Romish congregations in Holland also were, by his influence, and the ministry of his friends, entirely gained over to the Jansenist party. But that which offends most the creatures of the pontiff, is the austerity of this party, and the severity that reigns in their system of moral discipline and practical religion. For the Jansenists cry out against the corruptions of the Church of Rome, and complain that neither its doctrines nor morals retain any traces of their former purity. They reproach the clergy with an universal depravation, and an entire forgetfulness of the dignity of their character. They censure the licentiousness of the monastic orders, and insist upon the necessity of reforming their discipline according to the rules of sanctity and self-denial that were originally prescribed by their founders. They maintain also that the people ought to be carefully instructed in all the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, and that, for this purpose, the Holy Scriptures and public liturgies should be in their mother tongue: and, finally, they look upon it as a matter of the highest moment to persuade all Christians, that true piety does not consist in the observance of pompous rites, or in the performance of external acts of devotion, but in inward holiness.

“These sentiments of the Jansenists, on a general view, seem just and rational, and suitable to the spirit



of Christianity ; but, when we examine the particular branches into which they extend these general principles, and the manner in which they apply them, in their rules of discipline and practice, we shall find they are deeply tinged both with superstition and fanaticism.

“The abbot of St. Cyran is the great oracle of the party. His piety, such as it was, carried in it the marks of sincerity and fervour ; he was also superior, perhaps, as a pastor, to the greatest part of the Roman Catholic doctors ; and his learning, more especially his knowledge of religious antiquity, was very considerable : but to propose this man as a complete and perfect model of *genuine* piety, and as a most accurate and accomplished teacher of *Christian* virtue, is an absurdity peculiar to the Jansenists, and can be adopted by no person who knows what *genuine* piety and *Christian* virtue are. That we may not seem to detract rashly, and without reason, from the merit of this eminent man, it will not be improper to confirm what we have said by some instances. This good abbot, having undertaken to vanquish the *heretics* (that is, the Protestants) in a prolix and extensive work, was obliged to read, or at least to look into, the various writings published by that *impious tribe* ; and this he did in company with his nephew Martin de Barcos, who resembled him entirely in his sentiments and manners. But before he would venture to open a book composed by a Protestant, he constantly marked it with the *sign of the cross*, to expel the *evil spirit*. What weakness and superstition did this ridiculous proceeding discover ! for the good man was persuaded that Satan had fixed his residence in the books of the Protestants ; but it is not so easy to determine where he imagined the wicked spirit lay, whether in the paper, in the letters, between

the leaves, or in the doctrines of these *infernal* productions. His attachment to Augustine was so excessive, that he looked upon, as sacred and divine, even those opinions of that great man which the wiser part of the Romish doctors had rejected as erroneous and highly dangerous. Such, among others, was that extravagant and pernicious tenet, that *the saints are the only lawful proprietors of the world*; and that *the wicked have no right, by the divine law, to those things which they possess justly, in consequence of the decisions of human law*. To this purpose is the following assertion of our abbot, as we find it in Fontaine's *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de Port-Royal*, tom. i, p. 201 :—‘ Jesus Christ n'est encore entré dans la possession de son royaume temporel, et des biens du monde qui lui appartiennent, que par cette *petite portion* qu'en tient l'église par les bénéfices de ses clercs, qui ne sont que les fermiers et les depositaires de Jesus Christ.’ If, therefore, we are to give credit to this visionary man, the golden age is approaching, when Jesus Christ, having pulled down the mighty from their seats, and dethroned the kings and princes of the earth, shall reduce the whole world under his sole dominion, and give it over to the government of priests and monks, who are the *princes* of his church. After we have seen such sentiments as these maintained by their oracle and chief, it is but natural to be surprised when we hear the Jansenists boasting of their zeal in defending sovereign states, and in general the civil rights of mankind, against the stratagems and usurpations of the Roman pontiffs.

“ The notions of the abbot of St. Cyran concerning prayer, which breathe the fanatical spirit of mysticism, will further confirm what we have said of his propensity to enthusiasm. It is, for example, a favourite

maxim with him, that the Christian, who prays, ought never to recollect the good things he stands in need of in order to ask them of God, since true prayer does not consist in distinct notions and clear ideas of what we are doing in that solemn act, but in a certain *blind impulse* of divine love. Such is the account given of the abbot's sentiments on this head by Lancelot, in his *Memoires touchant la Vie de l'Abbé de S. Cyran*, tom. ii, p. 44 :—‘ Il ne croyoit pas,’ says that author, ‘ que l'on pût faire quelque effort pour s'appliquer à quelque point, ou à quelque pensée particuliere—parce que la veritable priere est plutôt un attrait de son amour, qui emporte notre cœur vers lui et nous enleve comme hors de nous-mêmes, que non pas une occupation de notre esprit, qui se remplit de l'idée de quelque objet quoique divin.’ According to this hypothesis, the man prays best who neither *thinks* nor *asks* in that act of devotion. This is, indeed, a very extraordinary account of the matter, and contains an idea of prayer which seems to have been quite unknown to Christ and his apostles ; for the former has commanded us to address our prayers to God in a set form of words ; and the latter frequently tell us the subjects of their petitions and supplications.

“ But of all the errors of this arch-Jansenist, none was so pernicious as the fanatical notion he entertained of his being the *residence* of the Deity, the *instrument* of the Godhead, by which the *divine nature* itself essentially operated. It was in consequence of this dangerous principle, that he recommended it as a duty incumbent on all pious men, to follow, without consulting their judgment or any other guide, the *first motions* and *impulses* of their minds, as the dictates of heaven. And indeed the Jansenists, in general, are intimately persuaded, that God *operates* immediately

upon the minds of those who have composed, or rather suppressed, all the motions of the *understanding* and *will*, and that to such he declares, from above, his intentions and commands ; since whatever thoughts, designs, or inclinations arise within them, in this calm state of tranquillity and silence, are to be considered as the direct suggestions and oracles of the divine wisdom.

“The Jansenists also make repentance consist chiefly in those voluntary sufferings which the transgressor inflicts upon himself. They look upon Christians as bound to expiate original guilt by acts of mortification, by torturing and macerating their bodies, by painful labour, and excessive abstinence ; and they hold every person obliged to increase these voluntary sufferings, in proportion to the corruption they have contracted by a vicious life. Nay, they do not scruple to call those *holy* self-tormentors, who have gradually put an end to their days by excessive abstinence or labour, the *sacred victims of repentance*. Not satisfied with this, they go further, and maintain, that the conduct of the self-murderers is peculiarly meritorious in the eye of Heaven ; and that their sufferings and labours appease the anger of the Deity, and not only contribute to their own felicity, but draw down abundant blessings upon their friends and upon the church. Accordingly the famous abbé De Paris put himself to a most painful death, in order to satisfy the justice of God.

“A striking example of this extravagant species of devotion was exhibited in that celebrated female convent called *Port-Royal in the fields*, which was situated in a retired, deep, and gloomy vale, not far from Paris. The government of this society was given by Henry IV. to Jaqueline, daughter of Anthony Arnaud, an eminent lawyer, and father to the famous Arnaud, doctor in

Sorbonne, who, after her conversion, assumed the name of Marie Angelique de la St. Madelaine. This happened in the year 1609, when she resolved to consecrate her future days to deep devotion and penitential exercises. This resolution was strengthened by her acquaintance with the abbot of St. Cyran, after whose example she modelled both her own conduct and the manners of her convent. Hence it happened, that, during the whole course of this century, the convent of Port-Royal excited the admiration of the Jansenists, and the attention of Europe. The virgins of this famous society observed, with the utmost exactness, that ancient rule of the Cistercians, which had been almost everywhere abrogated on account of its austerity. Such was the fame of this nunnery, that multitudes of pious persons were ambitious to dwell in its neighbourhood, and that a great part of the Jansenist Penitents, of both sexes, built huts without its precincts, where they imitated the manners of those who, in the fourth and fifth centuries, retired into the wild and uncultivated places of Syria and Egypt, and were commonly called *the Fathers of the Desert*. The end which these Penitents had in view was, by silence, hunger, thirst, prayer, bodily labour, watchings, and other voluntary acts of self-denial, to efface the guilt and remove the pollution the soul had derived from natural corruptions or evil habits. They did not, however, all observe the same discipline. The more learned consumed their strength in laborious productions, filled with sacred and profane erudition, and some of these have, no doubt, deserved well of the republic of letters: others were employed in teaching youth the rudiments of language and the principles of science: but the greatest part exhausted their strength in servile industry and rural labour. What is sur-



prising is, that many of these were persons illustrious both by their birth and stations, who, after having distinguished themselves in civil or military employments, debased themselves so as to assume the character, offices, and labours of the lowest servants.

“This celebrated retreat was subject to many vicissitudes during the whole course of this century: at one time it flourished in unrivalled glory; at another it seemed on the brink of ruin. At length, when the nuns refused to subscribe the declaration of Pope Alexander VII., Lewis XIV., in the year 1709, set on by the violent counsels of the Jesuits, ordered the convent of Port-Royal to be demolished, and the whole building to be levelled with the ground. And, lest there should remain some secret fuel to nourish the flame of superstition in that place, he ordered the very carcasses of the nuns and devout Jansenists to be dug up and buried elsewhere.”\*

Now, although the reviewer above quoted bestows high praise upon Jansenius, and upon “the polished and elegant scholars of Port-Royal,” it would be scarcely fair to father upon him all the superstitious fooleries of the Jansenists, or to conclude that, because there is a strong resemblance between the notions of the bishop of Ypres and those of the reviewer on the subject of perfect conformity to the law, therefore to him is to be attached the odium of all the said bishop’s fanaticism. But let it be remarked here, that *perfectionists* have not been the only *fanatics* with which the church has been cursed. And also, that on the *merits of penance*, the very foundation of Romish perfectionism, the Jansenists were, if possible, more explicit than the Jesuits themselves.

\* Wesley’s Eccles. Hist., vol. iv, pp. 44–55. See also Murdock’s Mosheim, vol. iii, pp. 332, 335, 487.

What, then, have we to do with a system of perfection which consists in voluntary sufferings, vows of celibacy, perpetual poverty, and the whole train of nonsensical whims, idolatrous rites, and heathenish corruptions of Romanism? What candour or courtesy is there in running the views of Christian perfection entertained by Mr. Wesley into those of "the followers of Loyola," as though there was a natural relationship between them? If writers upon this subject were not quite so much disposed to deal in generalities, it would be much better. If they would take the pains to bear in mind, and to keep before their readers, the fact that the term *perfection* is used by different sectaries in widely different senses, they would not so constantly blind them with false views, and subject themselves to the charge of disingenuousness.

The details of this lecture may be dry and uninteresting to some. But I hope the leading facts will not be slightly passed over, or soon forgotten; not only because they constitute a portion of the history of religious opinion, but as they show the process by which the extreme views of each party were matured, and especially as they show most clearly with what justice we are accused of holding the Pelagian and Romish doctrine of perfection.

## LECTURE VII.

## CONTROVERSIES—CONTINUED.

“To the law and to the testimony.” Isa. viii, 20.

EARLY in the seventeenth century the great doctrinal questions of predestination, election, free-will, &c., began to be discussed with warmth in the Belgic churches. The doctrines of Calvin and Beza on these points had made extensive inroads among these churches, and their formularies of faith had become moulded accordingly. These doctrines were called into question first by several divines at Delft, and James Arminius, becoming a convert to their views, finally raised strong opposition to what was claimed to be the orthodox doctrine of the Reformed churches of the Belgic provinces. Efforts being made to procure an official condemnation of the views of Arminius and his coadjutors, they presented to the states of Holland and West Friesland a memorial, bearing the name of a *Remonstrance*, which procured for them the name of *Remonstrants*. In this Remonstrance they presented their views upon the disputed topics in five articles, first stating the doctrines they rejected, and then those which they maintained.\*

The doctrines of these articles were finally condemned by the famous synod of Dort, and the Remonstrants banished the United Provinces.

The Reformed, as the contra-Remonstrants were called, must now make the world believe that this sentence was just; and not being able to make so clear

\* These articles may be consulted in the Memoirs of Simon Episcopus, by Frederick Calder, published and on sale at the Methodist Book Room, pp. 106–108.

a case as was to them desirable, predicated upon the published assertions of the Remonstrants, they charged upon them sundry grievous heresies not embraced in "the five articles, or *points*," as they were called. They were represented as Socinians, materialists, and what not. To invalidate these allegations, Episcopus drew up a *confession of faith*,\* which was approved and signed by his brethren and companions in suffering. There is nothing, either in the five articles or the confession, upon the subject of *Christian perfection*.

In a conference appointed by the states to be held between the Remonstrants and the contra-Remonstrants, Gomarus charged the Remonstrants with holding, besides the errors of the five articles, several other grievous heresies, among which was "the perfection of man in this life."† But it is a little remarkable, considering the latitude taken by the synod of Dort in "the rejection of errors," that no notice is taken in the acts of that body of the error of *perfection*. The first section of chap. x, "concerning the perseverance of the saints," simply assumes the perpetual existence of "the body of sin" "in this life," in "those whom God, according to his purpose, calleth to the fellowship of his Son." Upon this article Dr. Scott, the learned translator, gives us Art. xxix of the Belgic confession, which, because of its singular inappropriateness to his purpose, and consistency with the doctrine of evangelical perfection, I will here insert.

"They who constitute the true church; such a mark of them is the faith by which Christ, or their only

\* See the *Appendix* to Memoirs of Episcopus.

† See the Articles of the Synod of Dort, translated from the Latin, with notes, by Rev. Thomas Scott, D.D., &c. Philadelphia. Presbyterian Board of Publication, No. 78. Pp. 146, 147.

Saviour, being apprehended, they flee from sin, and follow after righteousness ; at the same time they love the true God and their neighbours, neither turning aside to the right hand nor to the left : they crucify the flesh, with its affections ; but by no means this indeed, as if there were not in them any longer infirmity : but that they fight against it through the whole time of their life, by the energy (*virtutem*) of the Holy Spirit ; and in the mean time they flee to the blood, the death, and the sufferings and obedience of our Lord Christ, as to their most safe protection."

Now let the reader mark these words : "They love the true God and their neighbours, *neither turning aside to the right hand nor to the left : they crucify the flesh, with its affections ;* but by no means this indeed, as if there were not in them any longer *infirmity*." This is quite good Wesleyan theology!—But the good doctor, lest it should not be considered truly confirmatory of the notion of the continued existence of "*the body of sin*" in believers, makes reference to several scriptures, such as Rom. vii, &c., to the ninth article of the Church of England, and adds the following *pertinent* (?) remark :—

"The Remonstrants, or Arminians of those days, held, it seems, the doctrine of sinless perfection in this life more *generally* than anti-Calvinists do at present."

Now is it not remarkable that the synod did not distinctly and explicitly condemn this "doctrine of sinless perfection," so "generally held" by "the Remonstrants?" If the Remonstrants so generally held this obnoxious doctrine, it must have been in their books ; and we are told by Mr. Hales that a large number of these books were laid upon the table for the purpose of furnishing the synod materials to work upon. And in his letter of January 6, he says, "They are



all together in consultation concerning their order of proceeding, and in gathering materials out of the Remonstrants' books, where they may frame their theses and propositions, which must be the subject of their disputation.”\*

The course of the synod in settling a point was first to set down and confirm what they considered the true view, and then to proceed to “the rejection of errors” on the same point. The condemned errors in the “Articles of the Synod of Dort” are marked as quotations, but no reference made to book or author; but it may be fairly concluded the synod intended to be understood as quoting the language of the Remonstrants. Their quotations may be faithful, but it would have been a gratification to some who may wish to judge of the language in its connection, to know who was its author, and where it might be found. It seems, according to Dr. Scott, that these errorists “held the doctrine of sinless perfection in this life more *generally* than anti-Calvinists do at this day,” and yet it would seem, from the fact that the synod said nothing about it, either that it was not to be found in their books, or if there, was not an error of sufficient magnitude to call for the condemnation of the synod. Why did not the synod carry out its plan upon this point, and after affirming that the saints are “not entirely in this life set free from the flesh and the body of sin,” proceed, in “the rejection of errors,” to quote, from the Remonstrants some such language as this: “Men may and often do attain to sinless perfection in this life?” I leave the doubt for others to solve; and until I have

\* See Golden Remains of the ever-memorable Mr. John Hales, of Eaton College, &c., with additions from the author's own copy, viz., Sermons and Miscellanies. Also Letters and Expresses concerning the Synod of Dort. London. 1678. Pp. 460, 461.

further light upon the subject, shall entertain the impression that Dr. Scott was not so fully informed as to what the "Remonstrants or Arminians of those days," or the "anti-Calvinists" of his own time, really held, touching "sinless perfection in this life," as he might have been.

I shall now proceed to show what were the views of the Remonstrants upon the subject of Christian perfection.

We have already seen that Arminius and his coadjutors were charged by Gomarus with holding "the perfection of men in this life." This charge called forth from Arminius a specific statement of his views, in which, it seems, he did not profess to differ from the earlier and more sober views of Augustine upon the subject. He says,—

"Besides those things of which I have already spoken, much has often been said concerning the perfection of believers, or the regenerate, in this life, and it is reported that I hold views on this subject which are improper, and almost the same as those of the Pelagians, viz., that the regenerate can in this life perfectly observe the precepts of God. To this I reply, that I ought not, on this account, to be considered either partially or wholly a Pelagian, even if I held this view; provided that I should make this addition,—that they could do this by the grace of Christ, but by no means without it. Yet I have never said that the believer can in this life perfectly observe the precepts of Christ, nor have I ever denied it, but have left it entirely undetermined, resting satisfied with what Augustine says on this subject, whose words I have often quoted in the university, with the remark, that I had nothing more to add to them.

"They are these :—There are four questions which

may be attended to in this matter. The first is, Whether there ever was any man without sin, or one who, from the beginning of his life even to its end, did not transgress? The second is, Whether there ever has been, or now is, or can be, one who does not sin; that is, one who has attained to such perfection in this life, that he does not commit sin, but perfectly fulfils the law of God? The third is, Whether it may be possible that a man should, in this life, be free from sin? The fourth is, If a man can be free from sin, why is such a one never found? To the first, Augustine answers, that there never was, or will be, such a man, except Jesus Christ. To the second, that he does not think that any man has ever attained to such perfection in this life. To the third, that a man could be such by the grace of Christ, and his own free will. To the fourth, that man does not that, which he could do through the grace of Christ, either because that which is good is hidden from him, or because he takes no delight in it.

“From this it appears that Augustine himself, who was the most strenuous opponent of the Pelagian doctrine, was yet of this opinion, that a man could, by the grace of Christ, be without sin in this life. And indeed Augustine says: ‘Let Pelagius admit that man can be without sin, but only through the grace of Christ, and there will be peace between us.’ But it seemed to Augustine to be the sentiment of Pelagius, that man could indeed keep the law of God by his own strength, but more easily by the grace of Christ. But how far I am from this opinion I have already sufficiently, and more than sufficiently shown; yet I will say this in addition, that I consider this opinion of Pelagius heretical, and that it opposes diametrically the words of Christ, ‘Without me ye can do nothing,’

(John xv, 5,) and that it is pernicious, and inflicts the deepest injury on the glory of Christ.”\*

The following account of the opinions of Episcopius, the eloquent successor of Arminius in the divinity chair of the university of Leyden, is taken from his answer to the nineteenth question proposed to him by his pupils in private disputations at Amsterdam :—

“Quest. 19. ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,’ Matt. v, 48. The question is, ‘What should be understood here by the word *perfect*? Is it that we should perfectly keep the commands of God and Christ without any sin, (except those sins which preceded conversion?) But if so, whether this is necessary for attaining to the life of the blessed.’

“Embracing the opportunity afforded by this question, I wish also to answer another—‘Whether a man, assisted by divine grace, can keep all the commands of God, even to a perfect fulfilment; that is, using the word love in a general manner for keeping the commandments, whether he can love as much as he ought to love according to the requirement of the gospel, or according to the covenant of grace?’ I, indeed, have no doubt on this point. My reasons are these :—1st. God demands no other love than that which is rendered by the whole mind, the whole heart, and all the strength. Therefore he demands nothing beyond or above the strength. 2d. God promises that he will circumcise the heart of his people, that they may love

\* See “Declaration of Sentiments,” Works, p. 99.—This extract is taken from a translation of the Works of Arminius, now in progress by a competent hand. An English translation of the complete Works of Arminius has long been a desideratum; and I most earnestly hope the gentleman now engaged in executing this work, and who has so kindly permitted me to make use of his manuscript, will, at no distant date, have it ready for the press.

him with their whole heart and mind. Deut. xxx, 6. 3d. God himself testifies that there have been those who have kept all his commands all the days of their life with their whole mind, and heart, and strength, and this in the sight of God : as we may read of Asa, 1 Kings xv, 14; of the whole people, 2 Chron. xv, 12; of David, 1 Kings xi, 34, and xiv, 8, and xv, 11; of Josiah, 2 Kings xxii, 2, that he ‘turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and might, according to all the law of Moses,’ 2 Kings xxiii, 25. And we read that these things were attributed to them by God under the old covenant. Who, then, can doubt that the same thing can have place in the new covenant?

“The common distinction between a perfection of parts and one of degrees requires explanation. For if by a perfection of degrees is meant the highest perfection, or that which exists in the highest degree in such a sense that it is equal to the divine perfection, and can neither increase nor be augmented, then it is certain that it is impossible on the earth. For no man rises to the degree of the divine perfection, and it is the nature of love that it should always wish to progress; nor does it even think of what has already been accomplished, but of what remains to be done. But if by a perfection of degrees is understood that highest perfection which consists in the highest exertion of human strength assisted by grace, and which is joined with the purpose of making continual progress in proportion to his increased strength, then I believe that there is no reason why it should be said to be impossible to man on the earth. Indeed, there is the justest reason that the opinion that this is impossible should be ranked among the most dangerous, and be considered the pillow of security.

“You ask whether the highest perfection in this



sense is absolutely necessary to salvation? Answer: The highest evangelical perfection (for we are not treating of a legal perfection, which includes sinlessness entire in all respects and in the highest degree, even that which is perpetual, and excludes all imperfection, infirmity, and inadvertency through the whole life, for this we believe to be impossible) embraces two things:—1st. A perfection proportioned to the powers of each individual; 2d. A desire of making continual progress, and of increasing one's strength more and more. This perfection varies in respect to beginners, proficient, and those perfect in the knowledge of the divine truth, and of that love which is required of us: for which reason there is one perfection higher than another, or the perfection of some is higher than the perfection of others. The perfection of all and each, or in all and each, is not, and cannot be the same. Yet the highest degree of perfection of all and each, in proportion to the unequal strength of all and each, is necessary for salvation: which perfection we place in this, that no one omit or commit that which he knows that he should not, but can omit or commit; that is, that no one sin against his conscience, whatever it may be. The latter, that is, the desire of making continual progress, is common to all, and this should therefore be similar and equal in all and each in proportion to the strength of each; and is absolutely necessary for salvation, and ought both to precede penitence and to follow all penitence, as can be proved by very many testimonies of Scripture, to bring forward which is not a part of my purpose at this time, nor does it belong to this school."

The learned Limborch gives us the following account of his views upon the subject:—

"The possibility of keeping the commandments of

our Saviour is taken for granted by what has been said of the necessity thereof; since things necessary must be observed, but impossibilities cannot. But for the due discussing of this point, the state of the question ought in the first place to be laid down.

“There is a threefold opinion at present concerning the possibility of observing the precepts of Christ by the assistance of God’s grace: for as to the opinion of Pelagius, that a man might by his own strength fulfil the whole law of God, we shall say nothing about it, since ’tis at present exploded by all men, and has no one advocate that we know of. The first opinion, then, which we shall mention, is that of those who maintain, that a man may, by the grace of God, arrive to such a degree of perfection, as not to be tempted to sin by any, even the first motion of concupiscence; or be affected with any love to the creature, so as to love God for his own sake only, without any regard had to a reward. A second opinion is that of those persons who tell us, that the law of God requires of man an obedience altogether perfect, as to its parts, duration, and degree, by the merit of which he may attain eternal life: but that man, by our first parents’ transgression, imputed to all his posterity, is rendered incapable of fulfilling the law, and therefore finds his own righteousness in the righteousness of Christ, who did fulfil the law: that therefore a man cannot keep the commandments of God, even though he be assisted by the grace of God, and regenerated by the Spirit of Christ; but that all his perfection consists in a complacency in, and a resolution of perfection, and in a constant acknowledgment of our imperfection, with an expectation of being rendered perfect in the world to come. The middle opinion between these two extremes is our own, viz., that a man may, by the assistance of

God's grace, keep the precepts commanded in the gospel, after such a manner, and in such a degree of perfection, as God requires of us under the denunciation of eternal damnation. The two first opinions run counter to each other; the one makes the way to eternal life too narrow, the other too broad; the one would have us endued with that perfection which is only to be had in the other world, while the other puts off to that time the perfection which we may here obtain.

"We have no need to labour much at the refuting the first opinion, since its own absurdity is enough to overthrow it. They would have a man to be free from the least temptation to sin, even from the very first motions of concupiscence, which are natural and unavoidable: and they believe it to be unlawful to obey God in hopes of a reward; which may move some persons to despair, and takes off that motive to obedience which God himself is pleased to prescribe to us. For the love of any good cannot be eradicated, but by the expectance and love of a contrary good; nor can the love of earthly and sensual objects be removed, but by our love of spiritual and heavenly things.

"All then that we need to do, is fairly to state the controversy between the second and third opinions; which seems wholly to turn upon these two main questions: (1.) Whether the law of God, even according to the gospel, requires of a man a perfect and absolute obedience, which shall not be subject to the least failing? Or whether God, as a tender Father, may not use some indulgence, and abate of the rigour of the law? (2.) Whether a man can observe and perform the law as he is required in the gospel? Or whether he can only discharge the beginnings of obedience, his regeneration beginning in this life, and consummated in the next? Now, whoever duly considers each branch of

this matter in dispute, will perceive that there is not much difference between these two opposite opinions, and that it lies more in the circumstances than in the thing itself. But whereas the whole controversy cannot be so easily adjusted as could be wished, it will not be improper to treat a little more particularly about it.

“As to the first question, then, we say, that God in the gospel does not exact such a strict, perfect, absolute, and sinless obedience, as to threaten destruction and eternal damnation to all those who shall be guilty of any the least offence: but that he treats us like an indulgent father; and though he does not approve of the failings of the faithful, yet he is graciously pleased to forgive them to those who sincerely seek him and repent of their sins. For God under the new covenant requires repentance, and not a sinless obedience, upon which he promises remission of sins. Now repentance presupposes sin, nor does it for the future wholly exclude the committing all acts of sin, since a vicious habit cannot be conquered in a moment: and hence the man, especially in his entrance on a Christian state, is subject to relapses; against which, if he makes continual struggles, he will by degrees master them, and make every day a further progress in a religious course.

“However, there are many objections started by men of the contrary opinion, which we shall consider and answer. First, they object that God is perfectly just, and consequently cannot allow of any other righteousness but what is altogether perfect. *Answ.* (1.) God is indeed just, but withal an absolute sovereign, subject to no superior being; therefore he may recede from his right, and not rigidly exact whatever he might in justice require, but prescribe a law mixed with some grace and indulgence. (2.) The obedience which God requires under the denunciation of everlasting punish-

ment is perfect, as being correspondent to the stipulation contained in the divine covenant; without performing of which a man cannot obtain salvation: but if the man performs it, God, as a righteous judge, without any violation of his justice, may, and really will, adjudge salvation to him.

“Secondly. They say, the law requires such an obedience as was due from man before the fall, that is, an entirely perfect one; since it requires obedience with all the strength, viz., such a strength as man had in his state of innocence. *Answ.* From whence does it appear, that when God requires obedience with all our strength, he means such an ability as man was endued with before the fall? This is therefore said gratis, and without any manner of proof: nay, this would be repugnant to the righteousness and justice of God, if he should require obedience proportionable to that strength which our first parent, and with him (according to their tenets) all his posterity, lost by the fall, and which God never restored to them. This would look as oddly as it would in a prince to demand a grandson to maintain such a number of troops with his estate, of which that prince had before deprived his grandfather.

“Again they object, that Christ commands us to be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. *Answ.* They will not venture surely to assert that here is any equality, but only a likeness of perfection prescribed, viz., that we should sincerely endeavour after holiness, even as God himself is holy. Whosoever, then, does heartily forsake his sins, and is ready to obey God in all things that he does or can know to be his duty, is perfect as God is perfect.

“As to the second question, in order to the due stating thereof we say, that the same degree of obe-



dience which we showed to be necessary to salvation, is also possible for a faithful and regenerate man to perform, viz., not a sinless or absolutely perfect obedience, but such as consists in a sincere love and habit of piety, which excludes all habit of sin, with all enormous and deliberate actions. But since there are three degrees of regenerate persons, viz., beginners, who sincerely repent of their sins, though the struggling against them is somewhat difficult; proficients, who with less trouble and greater alacrity resist sin; and perfect persons, who have already subdued the habit of sin, and take a delight in the practice of virtue: we think it proper to explain our opinion a little more distinctly. 'Tis plain that it is necessary for all men, in order to be partakers of everlasting salvation, that they should at least attain the first degree of regeneration, since without it there is no salvation. But if, after they have attained it, they should immediately die, no question but, according to the terms of the gospel, they will be saved. But if their lives should be spared, they must aspire to the second, and so on to the third degree of regeneration; since God requires the love of our whole man, which cannot be regular unless we proceed from one degree of perfection to another. For the maintaining of this our opinion we shall make use of the following arguments:—(1.) God requires an obedience to his commands, annexing salvation to the performance, and threatening eternal punishment to the non-performance of them; therefore it is possible, for else God would be unjust in requiring impossibilities of men. (2.) The commandments of God are so far from being impossible, that they are denied to be grievous, (1 John v, 3;) nay, our Lord himself assures us, that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. Matt. xi, 30. (3.) St. John assures

us, that a regenerate man may arrive to such a degree of perfection, as not only not to sin, but even to be incapable in some sort of sinning. 1 John iii, 9; v, 18. (4.) It is said of some in Scripture, that they are perfect. 1 Cor. ii, 6; Phil. iii, 15. (5.) The apostles themselves, in their epistles, frequently wish that the faithful might attain to perfection; (1 Thess. v, 23; Phil. i, 9-11; Col. i, 9, 10; Heb. xiii, 20, 21;) now these desires would have been to no purpose, had the apostles wished impossibilities. (6.) There are several instances mentioned in Scripture of persons who sought the Lord with their whole heart, and obeyed the Lord faithfully, such as David, (1 Kings xi, 34, and xiv, 8,) Asa, (1 Kings xv, 11; 2 Chron. xv, 17,) Josiah, (2 Kings xxii, 2; 2 Chron. xxxiv, 2,) Zacharias, and Elisabeth. Luke i, 6. (7.) And lastly, the contrary opinion is very destructive of piety, and renders all our exhortations to it insignificant.

“But now let us hear what the maintainers of the contrary opinion have to say for themselves. In the first place, then, they tell us, that there are some remains of unregeneracy even in a regenerate man, viz., the flesh with the affections and lusts, which always war against the Spirit, and every now and then draw the man into sin. But having elsewhere refuted this argument, we shall not insist upon it here.

“Again they say, that no man does keep the commandments of God, from whence they infer that they cannot be kept by men; since if they could, it is hardly credible, that not one man could be found who had not done it. *Ans.* It is one thing not to be free from sin, and another frequently and daily to fall into sin after repentance. They, indeed, who have indulged themselves in sin before repentance, are truly said not to be free from sin; but daily to commit enormous crimes

after repentance is contrary to regeneration. Besides, we do not say that a man can live blameless without falling into any sin, since our human infirmity is such as not to allow of such a sinless perfection; but this we do assert, that we ought to proceed in a Christian course, to amend our failings, to watch against temptations, till at last we arrive to perfection, and by the grace of God attain everlasting life.

“The last objection we shall mention is, that God requires us to love him with all our hearts and with all our strength: but this, say they, we cannot do. *Answ.* Forasmuch as God requires that we should love him, not above, but with all our strength, it is evident that nothing exceeding our abilities is required at our hands. That this may appear the more distinctly, 'tis to be noted, that ‘the love of God consists in obeying his commands,’ 1 John v, 3. Therefore, if a hearty obedience be paid to the divine commands, God also is loved with all the heart and with all the strength. The sincerity and integrity of love, then, is here commanded, and that love is sincere which proceeds from a heart unfeigned, and is not divided or interrupted by any intervening sins. But this is not out of a man’s power to perform.”\*

It may be necessary, before we pass, to make a few notes upon the foregoing extracts. The views of Arminius upon Christian perfection seem to be rather in a transition state. The same was the fact in relation to the defectability of the saints. Upon this point, in the declaration of his sentiments to the states of Holland, he says, “I declare, very frankly, that *I have never taught that a true believer will finally and totally fall away and perish*; although I do not deny that

\* See English translation of Limborch’s *Theologia Christiania*, book v, chap. xxv, sec. 2.

there are texts of Scripture which seem to favour this sentiment, and which I have not seen answered in any way to my entire satisfaction ; while, on the other hand, there are some of an opposite character which deserve attentive consideration." The recovery of truth, after it has been long forgotten, or discredited, is generally *progressive*. And it often happens that the mind that grasps its great leading features, leaves it to others to follow out the details. Thus it was in the revival of sound Scripture views of the plan of salvation in the Low Countries. Arminius led the way, and laid the foundation for the system of theology which was systematized and settled in its details by Episcopius, Cir-cellius, and Limborch. And hence, though Arminius says nothing confidently as to the possibility of total apostacy from the favour of God, the Remonstrants subsequently settled upon what we conceive the true ground. In the fifth article of their confession it is asserted, that "it is possible for true believers to fall away from the true faith, and to fall into sins of such a description as cannot consist with a true and justifying faith ; nor is it only possible for them thus to fall, but such lapses frequently occur."

The same progressive development is to be remarked upon the subject of Christian perfection. Professor Stuart, after giving an abstract of the passage which I have given at length, remarks as follows :—"It would seem from this, that in theory Arminius held to the *ability* of a regenerate man to keep the law of God perfectly when assisted by divine grace ; but as a matter of *fact*, he did not maintain that any did thus keep it."\*

I think this a stronger inference than the language of Arminius warrants. He simply says : "I ought not,

\* Creed of Arminius : with a brief Sketch of his Life and Times. Biblical Repository, vol. i, p. 273.

on this account, to be considered either partially or wholly a Pelagian, even if I held this view; provided that I should make this condition—that they could do this by the grace of Christ, but by no means without it. Yet I have never said that the believer can in this life perfectly observe the precepts of Christ, nor have I ever denied it, but have left it entirely undetermined.” It is consequently more than is warranted, if it be not directly contradicting the words of Arminius, to say that he “held to the *ability* of a regenerate man to keep the law of God perfectly,” when all he says is, that he has “never said,” nor “denied it,” but leaves it “entirely undetermined.”

There would seem, at first blush, some likeness between the views of Arminius and those of Dr. Woods, but, upon a little examination, it will appear that there is a radical difference between them in two respects:—1. Arminius does not positively assert that it is possible for a Christian perfectly to keep the law, but leaves it doubtful; whereas Dr. Woods positively declares that it is possible, and that this is the sense of evangelical divines generally. 2. Arminius left the *fact*, whether any ever had attained to this state of perfection, equally in doubt; whereas the Andover professor peremptorily *denies* the *fact*. The views of Dr. Woods will hereafter be fully discussed.

Of the systematic statement of the doctrine of Christian perfection by Episcopius and Limborch it is not necessary to say much; a few remarks may, however, be necessary:—1. These acute theologians make a clear distinction between the law and the gospel—or between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. The perfection for which they contend is to be graded “according to the requirements of the gospel, or according to the covenant of grace”—or “the law of



God according to the gospel." This principle is fundamental in the evangelical system of perfection.

2. The scriptures these authors quote are in some instances rather too rigidly interpreted. They must be understood as somewhat modified by their connections.

3. There is a little indefiniteness upon the point of the *necessity* of this perfection to salvation. The views of Mr. Wesley are much more specific and consistent, viz., That we must either be in the possession of this high state of grace, or be *pressing after it*, if we would *retain* the favour of God, and be *certain of heaven*.

4. It is by no means necessary to plead the divine prerogatives to justify the change of the covenants or their conditions. I know "God is a sovereign, subject to no superior being;" and that "he may recede from his right, and not rigidly exact whatever he might in justice require, but prescribe a law mixed with some grace and indulgence." This is conceded—all this God might do, should he see proper, and did the necessity of the case require it. But does not this supposition too much lose sight of the *compensative* character of the great atonement? It should never be forgotten that Christ, by his sacrificial death, has "magnified the law and made it honourable"—has "brought in everlasting righteousness"—so that "God may be *just*, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." In making the terms of salvation practicable to the sinner, by the atonement, the claims of justice are so met that God *recedes from no right*. Still it must be obvious that in providing the means of salvation—in making the provisions, and fixing the terms—God does act wholly as "an absolute sovereign." His own arm wrought the deliverance: but it is brought about in such a way as to sustain the *righteousness* of his government.

Were it consistent, I would here speak at length of the orthodoxy of the Remonstrants, but I can only say a very few words upon the subject. Professor Stuart has rendered great service to the cause of truth in his discussion of the opinions of Arminius. He acknowledges him perfectly orthodox upon the great doctrines of "the divine inspiration; the entire sufficiency, and the paramount authority of the Scriptures,"—"the *trinity*"—"total depravity"—"the vicarious sacrifice and atonement of Christ"—"justification by grace alone through faith in Christ"—"regeneration by the special and supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit;" and that "on the doctrine of decrees only does he appear to have been at open war with some of his brethren, especially with Gomar, his colleague." For these fair and honest declarations the professor has been taken severely to task by several of his brethren.\* But these gentlemen must falsify history to make good their charges, either against Arminius, or against his learned defender.

\* See Murdock's *Mosheim*, vol. iii, pp. 508, 509; and Dr. Miller's *Introductory Essay to the Articles of the Synod of Dort*, pp. 19-21.

## LECTURE VIII.

## CONTROVERSIES—CONTINUED.

“To the law and to the testimony.” Isa. viii, 20.

I SHALL now notice the controversy upon the subject of Christian perfection in which Messrs. Wesley and Fletcher took a part. I have, on a former occasion, given from their Works a statement of the doctrine as held by these writers. To give their arguments *in extenso* will not comport with my design, as I wish not, were I able, to supersede the standard writings of these great authors upon this subject. A few specimens, however, of the positions and arguments *pro* and *con* will be attempted.

Mr. Wesley asserted a qualified perfection, attainable in this life; and for the benefit of those who felt disposed to look at the question practically, he caused the views, which, after due discussion, were settled upon in the conferences, to be entered upon the minutes and published. These, with further explanations, but no essential alterations, he digested in a tract, entitled, “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.” This, with several sermons upon the subject, and Mr. Fletcher’s “Last Check to Antinomianism,” constitute the standards of the Wesleyan Methodists upon the subject of Christian perfection. From these sources a complete history of the controversy may be gathered.

As a matter of course, “this new doctrine,” as it was called, was violently opposed by the Calvinists, both in the Establishment and among the Dissenters, and also by the pharisaic semi-Pelagians of the age. By one

class it was condemned as heresy, and by the other denounced as fanaticism. John Wesley was indeed set up at once as a Pelagian, a Papist, a Ranter, and what not. He was charged with heresies the most flagrant and contradictory : but still his fanaticism was so much like the spirit of the apostles, and his heresy so well sustained by sound philosophy and good logic, that his system won its way in spite of the most formidable opposition.

I will here furnish a few specimens of the true position occupied by Mr. Wesley's opponents, and the manner in which they prosecuted the controversy against him.

Mr. Toplady, in his "Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England," endeavours to trace the likeness between Mr. Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection and the "Rantism" of former times. Having introduced an account from Strype of Anthony Randall, he makes several remarks in consecutive order, in some of which he contrasts Mr. Wesley with the "Ranter," and in others draws a parallel between them. His fourth and fifth remarks are as follows :—

"4. He [Randall] was an avowed perfectionist : and, 5. Was a most uncharitable bigot ; else he had never affirmed that every one who preaches against his reigning doctrine of sinless perfection, knows nothing of God, or of Christ, or of the Holy Spirit. Who, on this occasion, can help thinking on Messrs. John Wesley and Walter Sellon ? I mean so far as concerns the tenet of perfection."\*

Mr. Toplady takes his position in his own peculiar style, thus :—"Such being the unrelaxing perfection which the law inflexibly requires, it necessarily follows

\* Works of Aug. Toplady, p. 79.

that the supposition of possible perfection on earth is the most fanatic dream, and the most gigantic delusion which can whirl the brain of a human being.”\*

This singular writer with as little truth as modesty charges Mr. Wesley with Manicheanism. The following is an instance :—

“Poor Manes ! with how excellent a grace do Arminians call thee a heretic ! And, above all, such Arminians (whereof Mr. John Wesley is one) as agree with thee in believing the attainability of sinless perfection here below ; or, to use the good old Manichean phrase, who assert that the evil principle may be totally separated from man in the present life.”

This sweet-spirited writer continues : “Mr. Wesley seems much displeased with a brace of gentlemen, whose names he has not communicated to the public ; but who appear, from his account of them, to be in no very fair way toward sinless perfection. One of these, we are told, delivered his mind to this effect : ‘I frequently feel tempers, and speak many words, and do many actions, which I do not approve of ; but I cannot avoid it. They result, whether I will or no, from the vibrations of my brain, together with the motion of my blood, and the flow of my animal spirits. But these are not in my own power. I cannot help them. They are independent on my choice.’ Thus far I totally agree with the gentleman unknown.”†

Let these specimens of the logic, the courtesy, and the Christian charity with which Mr. Wesley was met, answer for the present. Others were less violent, but all who entered the lists against him on the subject of perfection seemed to consider the doctrine of *the possibility of loving God with all the heart in this life* a grand corruption of the Christian doctrine, and the

\* Works of Aug. Toplady, p. 141.

† Ibid., p. 816.



maintainers of it entitled to no other treatment than that to which the worst of heretics are entitled.

The following extract from Mr. Fletcher will show more in detail the state of the question as it was then discussed, and the arguments employed on either side.

“I repeat it, if our pious opponents decry the doctrine of Christian perfection, it is chiefly through misapprehension; it being as natural for pious men to recommend exalted piety, as for covetous persons to extol great riches. And this misapprehension frequently springs from their inattention to the nature of Christian perfection. To prove it, I need only oppose our definition of Christian perfection to the objections which are most commonly raised against our doctrine.

“I. ‘Your doctrine of perfection leads to pride.’ Impossible, if Christian perfection is perfect humility.

“II. ‘It exalts believers; but it is only to the state of the vainglorious Pharisee.’ Impossible. If our perfection is perfect humility, it makes us sink deeper into the state of the humble, justified publican.

“III. ‘It fills men with the conceit of their own excellence, and makes them say to a weak brother, “Stand by, I am holier than thou.”’ Impossible again. We do not preach pharisaic but Christian perfection, which consists in perfect poverty of spirit, and in that perfect ‘charity’ which ‘vaunteth not itself, honours all men, and bears with the infirmities of the weak.’

“IV. ‘It sets repentance aside.’ Impossible; for it is perfect repentance.

“V. ‘It will make us slight Christ.’ More and more improbable. How can perfect faith in Christ make us slight Christ? Could it be more absurd to say, that the perfect love of God will make us despise God?

“VI. ‘It will supersede the use of mortification and

watchfulness ; for, if sin is dead, what need have we to mortify it, and to watch against it ?

“ This objection has some plausibility : I shall therefore answer it various ways :—1. If Adam, in his state of paradisiacal perfection, needed perfect watchfulness and perfect mortification, how much more do we need them, who find ‘ the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ’ planted, not only in the midst of our gardens, but in the midst of our houses, markets, and churches ? 2. When we are delivered from sin, are we delivered from peccability and temptation ? When the inward man of sin is dead, is the devil dead ? is the corruption that is in the world destroyed ? and have we not still our five senses to ‘ keep with all diligence,’ as well as our ‘ hearts,’ that the tempter may not enter into us, or that we may not enter into his temptations ? Lastly : Jesus Christ, as son of Mary, was a perfect man. But how was he kept so to the end ? Was it not by ‘ keeping his mouth with a bridle, while the ungodly was in his sight,’ and by guarding all his senses with perfect assiduity, that the wicked one might not touch him to his hurt ? And if Christ our head kept his human perfection only through watchfulness and constant self-denial, is it not absurd to suppose that his perfect members can keep their perfection without treading in his steps ?

“ VII. Another objection probably stands in Mr. Hill’s way : it runs thus :—‘ Your doctrine of perfection makes it needless for perfect Christians to say the Lord’s prayer. For if God “ vouchsafes to keep us this day without sin,” we shall have no need to pray at night that God would “ forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.” ’

“ We answer : 1. Though a perfect Christian does not trespass voluntarily, and break the law of love ; yet

he daily breaks the law of Adamic perfection, through the imperfection of his bodily and mental powers : and he has frequently a deeper sense of these involuntary trespasses than many weak believers have of their voluntary breaches of the moral law. 2. Although a perfect Christian has a witness that his sins are now forgiven in the court of his conscience, yet he knows 'the terrors of the Lord ;' he hastens to meet the awful day of God ; he waits for the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ in the character of a righteous Judge ; he keeps an eye to the awful tribunal, before which he must soon be justified or condemned by his words ; he is conscious that his final justification is not yet come ; and therefore he would think himself a monster of stupidity and pride, if, with an eye to his absolution in the great day, he scrupled saying, to the end of his life, 'Forgive us our trespasses.' 3. He is surrounded with sinners, who daily 'trespass against him,' and whom he is daily bound to 'forgive ;' and his praying that he may be forgiven now, and in the great day, 'as he forgives others,' reminds him that he may forfeit his pardon, and binds him more and more to the performance of the important duty of forgiving his enemies. And, 4. His charity is so ardent, that it melts him, as it were, into the common mass of mankind. Bowing himself, therefore, under the enormous load of all the wilful trespasses which his fellow-mortals, and particularly his relatives and his brethren, daily commit against God, he says, with a fervour that imperfect Christians seldom feel, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' &c. 'We are heartily sorry for our misdoings, (my own, and those of my fellow-sinners,) the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable.' Nor do we doubt but when the spirit of mourning leads a numerous assembly of supplicants into the

vale of humiliation, the person who puts the shoulder of faith most readily to the common burden of sin, and heaves the most powerfully, in order to roll the enormous load into the Redeemer's grave, is the most perfect penitent, the most exact observer of the apostolic precept, 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ;' and, of consequence, we do not scruple to say, that such a person is the most perfect Christian in the whole assembly.

"If Mr. Hill considers these answers, we doubt not but he will confess that his opposition to Christian perfection chiefly springs from his inattention to our definition of it, which I once more sum up in these comprehensive lines of Mr. Wesley:—

'O let me gain perfection's height!  
O let me into nothing fall!  
(As less than nothing in thy sight)  
And feel that Christ is all in all!'

"VIII. Our opponents produce another plausible objection, which runs thus:—'It is plain from your account of Christian perfection, that adult believers are free from sin, their hearts being purified by perfect faith, and filled with perfect love. Now, sin is that which humbles us, and drives us to Christ; and therefore, if we were free from indwelling sin, we should lose a most powerful incentive to humility, which is the greatest ornament of a true Christian.'

"We answer: Sin never humbled any soul. Who has more sin than Satan? And who is prouder? Did sin make our first parents humble? If it did not, why do our brethren suppose that its nature is altered for the better? Who was humbler than Christ? But was he indebted to sin for his humility? Do we not see daily that the more sinful men are, the prouder they

are also? Did Mr. Hill never observe, that the holier a believer is, the humbler he shows himself? And what is holiness, but the reverse of sin? If sin is necessary to make us humble, and to keep us near Christ, does it not follow that glorified saints, whom all acknowledge to be sinless, are all proud despisers of Christ? If humility is obedience, and if sin is disobedience, is it not as absurd to say, that sin will make us humble,—that is, obedient,—as it is to affirm, that rebellion will make us loyal, and adultery chaste? See we not sin enough, when we look ten or twenty years back, to humble us to the dust for ever, if sin can do it? Need we plead for any more of it in our hearts or lives? If the sins of our youth do not humble us, are the sins of our old age likely to do it? If we contend for the life of the man of sin, that he may subdue our pride, do we not take a large stride after those who say, ‘Let us sin, that grace may abound; let us continue full of indwelling sin, that humility may increase?’ What is, after all, the evangelic method of getting humility? Is it not to look at Christ in the manger, in Gethsemane, or on the cross? to consider him when he washes his disciples’ feet? and obediently to listen to him when he says, ‘Learn of me to be meek and lowly in heart?’ Where does the gospel plead the cause of the Barabbas and the thieves within? Where does it say, that they may indeed be nailed to the cross, and have their legs broken, but that their life must be left whole within them, lest we should be proud of their death? Lastly: what is indwelling sin but indwelling pride? At least, is not inbred pride one of the chief ingredients of indwelling sin? And how can pride be productive of humility? Can a serpent beget a dove? And will not men gather grapes from thorns, sooner than humility of heart from haughtiness of spirit?



“IX. The strange mistake which I detect would not be so prevalent among our prejudiced brethren, if they were not deceived by the plausibility of the following argument:—‘When believers are humbled for a thing, they are humbled by it. But believers are humbled for sin; and therefore they are humbled by sin.’

“The flaw of this argument is in the first proposition. We readily grant, that penitents are humbled for sin; or, in other terms, that they humbly repent of sin: but we deny that they are humbled by sin. To show the absurdity of the whole argument, I need only produce a sophism exactly parallel: ‘When people are blooded for a thing, they are blooded by it. But people are sometimes blooded for a cold; and therefore people are sometimes blooded by a cold.’

“X. ‘We do not assert that all perfection is imaginary: our meaning is, that all Christian perfection is in Christ; and that we are perfect in his person, and not in our own.’

“ANSWER.—If you mean by ‘our being perfect only in Christ,’ that we can attain to Christian perfection no other way than by being perfectly grafted in him, the true vine; and by deriving, like vigorous branches, the perfect sap of his perfect righteousness, to enable us to bring forth fruit unto perfection; we are entirely agreed. For we perpetually assert, that nothing but ‘Christ in us the hope of glory,’ nothing but ‘Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith,’ or, which is all one, nothing but ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,’ can ‘make us free from the law of sin,’ and ‘perfect us in love.’

“But as we never advanced that Christian perfection is attainable any other way than by a faith that roots and grounds us in Christ, we doubt some mystery of iniquity lies hid under these equivocal phrases:

‘All our perfection is in Christ’s person : we are perfect in him, and not in ourselves.’

“Should those who use them insinuate by such language, that we need not, cannot be perfect by an inherent personal conformity to God’s holiness, because Christ is thus perfect for us ; or should they mean, that we are perfect in him, just as county freeholders, entirely strangers to state affairs, are perfect politicians in the knights of the shire who represent them in parliament ; as the sick in a hospital are perfectly healthy in the physician that gives them his attendance ; as the blind man enjoyed perfect sight in Christ, when he saw walking men like moving trees ; as the filthy leper was perfectly clean in our Lord, before he had felt the power of Christ’s gracious words, ‘I will, be thou clean ;’ or as hungry Lazarus was perfectly fed in the person of the rich man at whose gate he lay starving : should this, I say, be your meaning, we are in conscience bound to oppose it, for the reasons contained in the following queries :—

“1. If believers are perfect because Christ is perfect for them, why does the apostle exhort them to ‘go on to perfection ?’

“2. If all our perfection is inherent in Christ, is it not strange that St. Paul should exhort us ‘to perfect holiness in the fear of God,’ by ‘cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit ?’ Did not Christ perfect his own holiness ? and will his personal sanctity be imperfect till we have cleansed ourselves from all defilement ?

“3. If Christ is perfect for us, why does St. James say, ‘Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect ?’ Is Christ’s perfection suspended upon the perfect work of our patience ?

“4. Upon the scheme which I oppose, what does St.

Peter mean when he says, 'After ye have suffered a while, the Lord make you perfect?' What has our suffering a while to do with Christ's perfection? Was not Christ 'made perfect through' his own 'sufferings'?

"5. If believers were perfect in Christ's person, they would all be equally perfect. But is this the case? Does not St. John talk of some who are perfected, and of others who are 'not yet made perfect in love?' Besides, the apostle exhorts us to be perfect, not in antinomian notions, but 'in all the will of God,' and 'in every good work;' and common sense dictates, that there is some difference between our good works and the person of Christ.

"6. Does not our Lord himself show, that his personal righteousness will by no means be accepted instead of our personal perfection, where he says, 'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit' (or whose fruit never grows to any perfection, see Luke viii, 14) 'my Father taketh away,' far from imputing to it my perfect fruitfulness?

"7. In the nature of things, can Christ's perfection supply the want of that perfection which he calls us to? Is there not a more essential difference between Christ's perfection and that of a believer, than there is between the perfection of a rose and that of the grass of the field? between the perfection of a soaring eagle and that of a creeping insect? If our Lord is the head of the church, and we the members, is it not absurd to suppose that his perfection becomes us in every respect? Were I allowed to carry on a Scriptural metaphor, I would ask, Is not the perfection of the head very different from that of the hand? And do we not take advantage of the credulity of the simple when we make them believe that an impenitent adulterer and murderer is perfect in Christ? or, if you please, that a crooked

leg and cloven foot are perfectly handsome, if they do but somehow belong to a beautiful face ?

“8. Let us illustrate this a little more. Does not the Redeemer’s personal perfection consist in his being God and man in one person ; in his being ‘eternally begotten’ by the Father as the ‘Son of God ;’ and ‘unbegotten’ in time by a father, as the ‘Son of man ;’ in his having ‘given his life a ransom for all ;’ in his having ‘taken it up again ;’ and his ‘standing in the midst of the throne, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him ?’ Consider this, candid believer, and say if any man or angel can decently hope that such an incommunicable perfection can ever fall to his share.

“9. As the Redeemer’s personal perfection cannot suit the redeemed, no more can the personal perfection of the redeemed be found in the Redeemer. A believer’s perfection consists in such a degree of faith as works by perfect love. And does not this high degree of faith chiefly imply, (1.) Uninterrupted self-diffidence, self-denial, self-despair ? (2.) A heartfelt, ceaseless recourse to the blood, merits, and righteousness of Christ ? And, (3.) A grateful love to him, ‘because he first loved us,’ and fervent charity toward all mankind for his sake ? Three things these, which, in the very nature of things, either cannot be in the Saviour at all, or cannot possibly be in him in the same manner in which they must be in believers.

“10. Is not the doctrine of our being perfect in Christ’s person big with mischief ? Does it not open a refuge of lies to the loosest ranters in the land ? Are there none who say, ‘We are perfect in Christ’s person : in him we have perfect chastity and honesty, perfect temperance and meekness ; and we should be guilty of pharisaic insolence if we patched his perfec-

tion with the filthy rags of our personal holiness? And has not this doctrine a direct tendency to set godliness aside, and to countenance gross antinomianism?

“Lastly: when our Lord preached the doctrine of perfection, did he not do it in such a manner as to demonstrate that our perfection must be personal? Did he ever say, ‘If thou wilt be perfect, only believe that I am perfect for thee?’ On the contrary, did he not declare, ‘If thou wilt be perfect, sell what thou hast,’ (part with all that stands in thy way,) ‘and follow me’ in the way of perfection? And again: ‘Do good to them that hate you, that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for he sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust,’ &c. ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.’ Who can read these words and not see that the perfection which Christ preaches is a perfection of holy dispositions, productive of holy actions in all his followers? and that, of consequence, it is a personal perfection, as much inherent in us, and yet as much derived from him, and dependant upon him, as the perfection of our bodily health? the chief difference consisting in this, that the perfection of our health comes to us from God in Christ, as the God of nature, whereas our Christian perfection comes to us from God in Christ, as the God of grace.”\*

I will close my notice of the controversy during this period with a specimen of a conflict between the furious Toplady and the logical Fletcher. In his “Caveat against Unsound Doctrine,” Mr. Toplady thus attempts to take the citadel by assault.

“What think you concerning the tenet of sinless perfection? which supposes that the very inbeing

\* Last Check to Antinomianism, sec. iii.



of sin may, on earth, be totally exterminated from the hearts of the regenerate ; and that believers may here be pure as the angels that never fell, yea, (I tremble at the blasphemy,) holy as Christ himself. To hold this heresy is the very quintessence of delusion ; but to imagine ourselves really in the state it describes were the very apex of madness. Yet many such there are ; some such I myself have known.

“Indwelling sin and unholy tempers do most certainly receive their death’s wound in regeneration ; but they do not quite expire until the renewed soul is taken up from earth to heaven. In the mean time, these hated remains of depravity will, too often, like prisoners in a dungeon, crawl toward the window, (though in chains,) and show themselves through the grate. Nay, I do not know whether the strivings of inherent corruption for mastery be not frequently more violent in a regenerate person than even in one who is dead in trespasses : as wild beasts are sometimes the more rampant and furious for being wounded. A person of the amplest fortune cannot help the harbouring of snakes, toads, and other venomous reptiles on his lands ; but they will breed, and nestle, and crawl about his estate, whether he will or no. All he can do is to pursue and kill them whenever they make their appearance ; yet, let him be ever so vigilant and diligent, there will always be a succession of those creatures TO EXERCISE HIS PATIENCE AND ENGAGE HIS INDUSTRY.

“Our Church enters an express caveat against the pestilent doctrine of perfection in her fifteenth article, entitled, ‘Of Christ alone without sin.’\* ”

“So it is declared, about the middle of the ninth article, that the ‘infection of nature doth remain ; yea, in them that be regenerated.’ ”

\* See the article, p. 154.

To the first part of this argument Mr. Fletcher replies as follows :—

“ 1. From the clause which I produce in capitals in this argument, one would think that patience and industry cannot be properly exercised without indwelling sin. If so, does it not follow that our Lord’s patience and industry always wanted proper exercise, because he was always perfectly free from indwelling sin? We are of a different sentiment with respect to our Lord’s Christian virtues; and we apprehend that the patience and industry of the most perfect believer will always, without the opposition of indwelling sin, find full exercise in doing and suffering the whole will of God; in keeping the body under, in striving against the sin of others, in testifying by word and deed that the works of the world are evil, in resisting the numberless temptations of him who ‘ goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;’ and in preparing to conflict with the king of terrors.

“ 2. Why could not assiduous vigilance clear an estate of snakes, as one of our kings cleared Great Britain of wolves? Did he not attempt and accomplish what appeared impossible to less resolute minds? Mr. Toplady is too well acquainted with the classics not to know what the heathens themselves have said of industry and love :—

*‘ Omnia vincit amor.*

*Labor improbus omnia vincit.’*

If ‘ love and incessant labour overcome the greatest difficulties,’ what cannot a diligent believer do who is animated by the love of God, and feels that he ‘ can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth him?’

“ 3. But the capital flaw of Mr. Toplady’s argument consists in so considering the weakness of free will, as entirely to leave God, and the sanctifying power of his

Spirit, out of the question. That gentleman forgets, that 'for this purpose the Son of God' (who is 'Lord God omnipotent') 'was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' Nor does he consider that a worm, assisted by omnipotence itself, is capable of the greatest achievements. Of this we have an illustrious instance in Moses, with respect to the removal of the lice, the frogs, and the locusts: 'Moses entreated the Lord, and the Lord turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt,' *Exod. x, 19*. If Mr. Toplady had not forgot the mighty God with whom Moses and believers have to do, he would never have supposed that the comparison holds good between Christ cleansing the thoughts and heart of a praying believer by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, and a man who can by no means destroy the snakes and toads that breed, nestle, and crawl about his estate.

"4. The reverend author of the *Caveat* sinks, in this argument, even below the doctrine of heathen moralists. For, suppose the extirpation of a vicious habit were considered, would not a heathen be inexcusable if he overlooked the succour and inspiration of the Almighty? And what shall we say of a gospel minister who, writing upon the destruction of sin, entirely overlooks what, at other times, he calls the 'sovereign, matchless, all-conquering, irresistible' power of divine grace, which, if we believe him, is absolutely to do all in us and for us? who insinuates, that the toad—pride, and the viper—envy, must continue to nestle and crawl in our breasts for want of ability to destroy them; and who concludes that the extirpation of sin is impossible, because we cannot bring it about by our own strength? Just as if the power of God, which helps our infirmi-

ties, did not deserve a thought ! Who does not see, that when a divine argues in this manner, he puts his bushel upon the light of Christ's victorious grace, hides this sin-killing and heart-cleansing light, and then absurdly concludes that the darkness of sin must necessarily remain in all believers ? Thus, if I mistake not, it appears that Mr. Toplady's argument in favour of the death-purgatory is contrary to history, experience, and gentilism ; and how much more to Christianity, and to the honour of Him who to the uttermost saves his believing people from their heart-toads and bosom-vipers, when they go to him for this great salvation !”

The argument from the Thirty-nine Articles had been urged also by Mr. Hill, who had insisted upon the inconsistency of holding the doctrine of perfection, and an honest subscription to these Articles. I can only give an abstract of Mr. Fletcher's answer. The whole is a most triumphant argument in proof that the Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy of the Church of England are so far from condemning the doctrine of Christian perfection, that they abundantly sustain it. Thus Mr. Fletcher proceeds :—

“In the preceding sections I have laid the axe at the root of some prejudices, and cut up a variety of objections. The controversial field is cleared. The engagement may begin : nay, it is already begun ; for Mr. Hill, in his Creed for Perfectionists, and Mr. Toplady, in his Caveat against Unsound Doctrines, have brought up, and fired at our doctrine, two pieces of ecclesiastical artillery,—the ninth and fifteenth articles of our Church ; and they conclude that the contents of these doctrinal cannons absolutely demolish the perfection we contend for. The report of their wrong-pointed ordnance, and the noise they make about our subscriptions, are loud ; but that we need not be afraid of the

shot will, I hope, appear from the following observations :—

“The design of the fifteenth article of our Church is pointed out by the title, ‘Of Christ alone without sin.’ From this title we conclude, that the scope and design of the article is not to secure to Christ the honour of being alone cleansed from sin ; because such an honour would be a reproach to his original and uninterrupted purity, which placed him far above the need of cleansing. Nor does the article drop the least hint about the impossibility of our being cleansed from sin before we go into the purgatory of the Calvinists ; I mean, the chambers of death. What our Church intends, is to distinguish Christ from all mankind, and especially from the Virgin Mary, whom the Papists assert to have been always totally free from original and actual sin. Our Church does this by maintaining, 1. That Christ was born without the least taint of original sin, and never committed any actual transgression. 2. That all other men, the Virgin Mary and the most holy believers not excepted, are the very reverse of Christ in both these respects ; all being conceived in original sin, and offending in many things, even after baptism,\* and with all the helps which we have under the Christian dispensation to keep us without sin from day to day. And, therefore, 3. That ‘if we say we have no sin,’—if we pretend, like some Pelagians, that we have no original sin ; or if we intimate, like some Pharisees,

\* “The Rev. Mr. Toplady, in his *Historic Proof*, page 235, informs us, that a Popish archbishop of St. Andrew’s condemned Patrick Hamilton to death, for holding, among other doctrines, ‘that children incontinent after baptism are sinners,’ or, which is all one, that baptism does not absolutely take away original sin. This anecdote is important, and shows that our Church levels at a Popish error the words of her Articles, which Mr. Hill and Mr. Toplady suppose to be levelled at Christian perfection.”



that 'we never did any harm in all our life,' that is, that we have no actual sin,—'we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,' there being absolutely no adult person without sin in those respects, except our Lord Jesus Christ.

"That this is the genuine sense of the article appears, 1. By the absurdity which follows from the contrary sentiment. For, if these words, 'Christ alone without sin,' are to be taken in an absolute and unlimited sense; if the word 'alone' entirely excludes all mankind at all times; if it is levelled at our being cleansed from sin, as well as at our having been always free from original and actual pollution; if this is the case, I say, it is evident that not only fathers in Christ, but also Enoch and Elijah, St. John and St. Paul, are to this day tainted with sin, and must, to all eternity, continue so, lest Mr. Hill's opinion of 'Christ alone without sin' should not be true.

"2. Our sentiment is confirmed by the article itself, part of which runs thus: 'Christ, in the truth of our nature, was made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted, from which he was clearly void, both in his flesh and in his spirit. He came to be a lamb without spot; and sin, as St. John says, was not in him. But all we the rest, although baptized and born again in Christ,' (that is, although we have, from our infancy, all the helps that the Christian dispensation affords men to keep them without sin,) 'yet offend in many things' after our baptism; 'and if we say' (as the above-mentioned Pelagians and Pharisees) 'that we have no' original, or no actual 'sin,' (that is, that we are like Christ in either of these respects, our conception, infancy, childhood, youth, and age being all taken into the account,) 'we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'

"Having thus opened the plain, rational, and Scrip-

tural sense in which we subscribe to our fifteenth article, it remains to make a remark upon the ninth.

“Some bigoted Pelagians deny original sin, or the Adamic infection of our nature; and some bigoted Papists suppose that this infection is entirely done away in baptism: in opposition to both these our Church prudently requires our subscription to her ninth article, which asserts, 1. That the fault and corruption of our nature is a melancholy reality; and, 2. That this fault, corruption, or infection, doth remain in them who are regenerated; that is, in them who are baptized, or made children of God according to the Christian dispensation. For every person who has attentively read our Liturgy, knows that these expressions, ‘baptized,’ ‘regenerated,’ and ‘made a member of Christ,’ and ‘a child of God,’ are synonymous in the language of our Church. Now, because we have acknowledged by our subscription to the ninth article, that the infection of nature is not done away in baptism, but does remain in them which are regenerate, or baptized, Mr. Hill thinks himself authorized to impose upon us the yoke of indwelling sin for life; supposing that we cannot be fair subscribers to that article unless we renounce the glorious liberty of God’s children, and embrace the antinomian gospel, which is summed up in these unguarded words of Luther, quoted by Bogatzky in his *Golden Treasury*:\* ‘The sins of a Christian are for his good; and if he had no sin, he would not be so well off, neither would prayer flow so well.’ Can any thing be either more unscriptural or absurd? What unprejudiced person does not see, we may with the greatest consistency maintain, that baptism does not remove the Adamic infection of sin, and that, nevertheless, this infection may be removed before death?

\* “See the edition printed in London, in 1773, p. 328.”

“Nevertheless, we are willing to make Mr. Hill all the concessions we can, consistently with a good conscience. If by ‘the infection of nature,’ he understands the natural ignorance which has infected our understanding, the natural forgetfulness which has affected our memory, the inbred debility of all our mental powers, and the poisonous seeds of mortality which infect all men from head to foot, and hinder the strongest believers from serving God with all the fervour they would be capable of were they not fallen from paradisiacal perfection, under the curse of a body sentenced to die, and ‘dead because of sin;’ if Mr. Hill, I say, understands this by ‘the infection of nature,’ we believe that such an infection, with all the natural, innocent appetites of the flesh, remains, not only in those whom the Scriptures call ‘babes in Christ,’ but also in fathers; there being no adult believer that may not say, as well as Christ, Adam, or St. Paul, ‘I thirst;’ ‘I am hungry;’ ‘I want a help meet for me;’ ‘I know but in part;’ ‘I see darkly through a glass;’ ‘I groan being burdened;’ ‘He that marrieth sinneth not;’ ‘It is better to marry than to burn,’ &c.

“But if Mr. Hill by ‘the infection of nature’ means the sinful lusts of the flesh, such as mental drunkenness, gluttony, whoredom, &c.; or if he understands unloving, diabolical tempers, such as envy, pride, stubbornness, malice, sinful anger, ungodly jealousy, unbelief, fretfulness, impatience, hypocrisy, revenge, or any moral opposition to the will of God; if Mr. Hill, I say, understands this by ‘the infection of nature;’ and if he supposes that these evils must radically and necessarily remain in the hearts of all believers, fathers in Christ not excepted, till death comes to cleanse the thoughts of their hearts by the inspiration of his ill-smelling breath; we must take the liberty of dissent-

ing from him : and we produce the following arguments to prove, that whatever Mr. Hill may insinuate to the contrary, the Church of England is not against that doctrine of evangelical perfection which we vindicate.

“ I. Our Church can never be so inconsistent as to level her Articles against what she ardently prays for in her Liturgy. But she ardently prays for Christian perfection, or for perfect love in this life : therefore she is not against Christian perfection. The second proposition of this argument can alone be disputed ; and I support it by the well-known collect in the communion service : ‘ Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ Here we see, 1. The nature of Christian perfection,—it is perfect love. 2. The seat of this perfect love,—a heart cleansed from its own thoughts. 3. The blessed effect of it,—a worthy magnifying of God’s holy name. 4. Its author,—God, of whom the blessing is asked. 5. The immediate means of it,—the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And lastly, the gracious procurer of it,—our Lord Jesus Christ.

“ II. This vein of godly desire after Christian perfection runs through her daily service. In her confession she prays, ‘ Restore thou them that are penitent, according to thy promises,’ &c., ‘ that hereafter we may live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name.’ Now godliness, righteousness, and sobriety, being the sum of our duty toward God, our neighbour, and ourselves, are also the sum of Christian perfection. Nor does our Church absolve any, but such as desire ‘ that the rest of their life may be pure and holy, so that at the last they may come to God’s eternal joy ;’ plainly intimating, that we may get a pure

heart, and lead a pure and holy life, without going into a death-purgatory ; and that those who do not attain to purity of heart and life, that is, to perfection, are in danger of missing God's eternal joy.

“III. Hence it is, that she is not ashamed to pray daily for sinless purity, in the *Te Deum* : ‘Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin ;’ that is, sinless, for I suppose that the title of our fifteenth article, ‘Of Christ alone without sin,’ means, Of Christ alone sinless from his conception to his last gasp. This deep petition is perfectly agreeable to the collects for the ninth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth Sundays after Trinity : ‘Grant to us the Spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful, that we may be enabled to live according to thy will,’ that is, to live without sin. ‘We pray thee, that thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us to be continually given to all good works,’ &c. ‘Grant thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow thee.’ ‘Mercifully grant, that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts.’ Again : ‘May it please thee, that by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him,’ (Luke, the evangelist and physician of the soul,) ‘all the diseases of our souls may be healed,’ &c. St. Luke’s day. ‘Mortify and kill in us all vices ;’ (and among them envy, selfishness, and pride ;) ‘and so strengthen us by thy grace, that, by the innocency of our lives, and constancy of our faith, even unto death, we may glorify thy holy name,’ &c. The Innocents’ day. ‘Grant us the help of thy grace, that in keeping thy commandments we may please thee both in will and deed.’ First Sunday after Trinity. ‘Direct, sanctify, and govern both our hearts and bodies in the ways of thy laws, and in the



works of thy commandments, that we may be preserved,' in those ways and works, 'in body and soul.' 'Prevent us in all our doings,' &c., 'and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy name.' Communion service. Once more: 'Grant that in all our sufferings here on earth,' &c., 'we may steadfastly look up to heaven, and by faith behold the glory that shall be revealed; and being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to bless our persecutors by the example of thy first martyr,' &c. St. Stephen's day. It is worth our notice, that blessing our persecutors and murderers is the last beatitude, the highest instance of Christian perfection, and the most difficult of all the duties which, if we may believe our Lord, constitute us perfect, in our sphere, as our heavenly Father is perfect. See Matt. v, 11, 44, 45, 48.

"Should that gentleman object, that although our Church bids us pray for Christian perfection in the above-cited collects, and in our Lord's prayer, yet she does not intimate that these deep prayers may be answered in this life; I oppose to that argument, not only the word 'on earth,' which she so frequently mentions in the Lord's prayer, but also her own words: 'Everlasting God, who art more ready to hear than we to pray, and art wont to give more than we desire,' &c., 'pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy,' &c. Twelfth Sunday after Trinity. Mr. Hill must therefore excuse us, if we side with our praying Church, and are not ashamed to say with St. Paul, 'Glory be to him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us," Eph. iii, 20, 21.

"Our Church cannot reasonably oppose what she ardently wishes to all her communicants, and what she

earnestly asks for and strongly recommends to all her members. But she thus wishes, asks, and recommends deliverance from all sins, and perfect charity, that is, Christian perfection : and therefore she cannot be against Christian perfection. The second proposition is founded, 1. Upon these words of the absolution, which she gives to all her communicants :—‘ Almighty God,’ &c., ‘ pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness.’ 2. Upon her collect for Quinquagesima Sunday : ‘ Send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues :’ St. Paul calls it ‘ the bond of perfection.’ And, 3. Upon the definition which she gives us of charity in her Homilies :—‘ Charity,’ says she, ‘ is to love God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our power and strength. With all our heart ; that is to say, that our heart, mind, and study be set to believe his word, and to love him above all things that we love best in heaven or in earth. With all our soul ; that is to say, that our chief joy and delight be set upon him, and our whole life given to his service. With all our power ; that is to say, that with our hands and feet, with our eyes and ears, our mouths and tongues, and with all our parts and powers, both of body and soul, we should be given to the keeping of his commandments. This is the principal part of charity, but it is not the whole ; for charity is also to love every man, good and evil, friend and foe, whatsoever cause be given to the contrary.’ Homily on Charity. ‘ Of charity, he’ (St. John) ‘ says, “ He that doth keep God’s word and commandment, in him is truly the perfect love of God,” &c. And St. John wrote not this as a subtle saying,’ &c., ‘ but as a most certain and necessary truth.’ Homily of Faith, part ii. ‘ Thus it is declared unto you, what

true charity or Christian love is,' &c., 'which love whosoever keepeth, not only toward God, whom he is bound to love above all things, but also toward his neighbour, as well friend as foe, it shall surely keep him from all offence of God, and just offence of man.' Homily of Charity, part ii. Again: 'Every man persuadeth himself to be in charity; but let him examine his own heart, his life and conversation, and he shall truly discern whether he be in perfect charity or not. For he that followeth not his own will, but giveth himself earnestly to God, to do all his will and commandment, he may be sure that he loveth God above all things, or else surely he loveth him not, whatsoever he pretend.' Homily on Charity. Once more: 'Perfect patience careth not what, nor how much it suffereth, nor of whom it suffereth, whether of friend or foe, but studieth to suffer innocently. Yea, he in whom perfect charity is, careth so little to revenge, that he rather studieth to do good for evil, according to the most perfect example of Christ upon the cross. Such charity and love as Christ showed in his passion should we bear one to another, if we will be his true servants. If we love but them that love us, what great thing do we do? We must be perfect in our charity, even as our Father in heaven is perfect.' Homily for Good Friday."

It should be well considered, that the language quoted here from the Liturgy and Homilies was written by the English reformers. The query naturally arises, whether these pious men could have used this language, and yet have denied the attainableness of a state of evangelical perfection. This I very much doubt. That they, in opposition to the Romish errors, sometimes expressed themselves incautiously in relation to the existence of *concupiscence in the regenerate*,

furnishes no conclusive evidence that, could our theory have been presented to them unincumbered with Pelagian or Popish errors, they would have rejected it as essentially erroneous.

These specimens are sufficient to show the true ground occupied by the two parties in this controversy, and the manner of attack and defense which characterized its prosecution. And as this is all that I designed to accomplish, I will here close this branch of the history of the controversy.

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## LECTURE IX.

### CONTROVERSIES—CONTINUED.

“To the law and to the testimony.” Isa. viii, 20.

In the present lecture I shall notice briefly the controversy upon the subject of Christian perfection now in progress among our Presbyterian and Congregational brethren in this country.

President Mahan and Professor Finney, of the Oberlin Theological Institute, with several others, have published views upon the subject which are deemed by most of their brethren as novel, and injurious to the interests of religion. As the works of these gentlemen, and those of their opponents, are before the public, and can be easily obtained, I shall not occupy much space in quoting their language.

Messrs. Mahan and Finney, in their systematic statements of the doctrine, tell us both what it is and what it is not. The following is the first part of President Mahan’s statement:—

“My design in the present discourse is to answer this one question: *What is perfection in holiness?* In answering this inquiry, I would remark, that perfection in holiness implies a full and perfect discharge of our entire duty, of all existing obligations in respect to God and all other beings. It is perfect obedience to the moral law. It is ‘loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.’ It implies the entire absence of all selfishness, and the perpetual presence and all-pervading influence of pure and perfect love. ‘Love is the fulfilling of the law.’”\*

Professor Finney’s is as follows:—“By entire sanctification, I understand the consecration of the whole being to God. In other words, it is that state of devotedness to God and his service required by the moral law. The law is perfect. It requires just what is right, all that is right, and nothing more. Nothing more nor less can possibly be perfection or entire sanctification, than obedience to the law. Obedience to the law of God in an infant, a man, an angel, and in God himself, is perfection in each of them. And nothing can possibly be perfection in any being short of this, nor can there possibly be any thing above it.”†

It will be perceived that these statements differ from those of our standards upon the point of *legal* obedience. They assert “perfect obedience to the moral law,” whereas Wesleyans deny the practicability of any such obedience.

Their theory is understood by their opponents to differ in this respect from the Wesleyan theory. Hence they set them down as a distinct class of perfectionists, holding to a *legal perfection*, which some think a

\* Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection, pp. 7, 8.

† Lecture I. Oberlin Evangelist, vol. ii, p. 1.



much *better*, and others a much *worse*, system than that of the Methodists.\*

My object at present is not so much to controvert the views of these brethren, as to call particular attention to a feature in their statements which has no place in our standards. This however seems to be materially modified by their negative propositions. As a specimen of this, I give the following from Mr. Mahan's negative statement:—

“Hence I remark, that perfection in holiness does not imply, that we now love God with all the strength and intensity with which redeemed spirits in heaven love him. The depth and intensity of our love depend, under all circumstances, upon the vigour and reach of our powers, and the extent and distinctness of our vision of divine truth. ‘Here we see through a glass darkly; there face to face.’ Here our powers are comparatively weak; there they will be endowed with an immortal and tireless vigour. In each and every sphere, perfection in holiness implies a strength and intensity of love corresponding with the reach of our powers and the extent and distinctness of our vision of truth in that particular sphere. The child is perfect in holiness who perpetually exercises a filial and affectionate obedience to all the divine requisitions, and loves God with all the powers which it possesses as a child. The man is perfect in holiness who exercises the same supreme and affectionate obedience to all that God requires, and loves him to the full extent of his knowledge and strength as a man. The saint on earth is perfect, when he loves with all the strength

\* See Dr. Pond's article, *Biblical Repository*, January, 1839, p. 45; and “The Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification stated, and defended against the Errors of Perfectionism, by W. D. Snodgrass, D.D.,” pp. 98, 99. “*Who shall decide when doctors disagree?*”

and intensity rendered practicable by the extent of his knowledge and reach of his powers in his present sphere. The saint in heaven will be favoured with a seraph's vision, and a seraph's power. To be perfect there, he must love and adore with a seraph's vigour, and burn with a seraph's fire."\*

Upon the two parts of the statement, Dr. Snodgrass remarks as follows :—"It [Christian perfection] is defined by a recent writer, as involving 'perfect obedience to the moral law.' It implies, he says, 'a full and perfect discharge of our entire duty in respect to God and all other beings.' And, if this definition were allowed to stand unqualified and unimpaired, we should desire no other. But it falls out, in immediate connection with this language, that the demands of the law of God upon us depend upon our '*circumstances*'—that 'our powers are comparatively weak'—and that what is required of us is holiness 'corresponding with the reach of our powers.' We are thus driven at once from what seemed to be safe and tenable ground, and thrown upon the radical error, that the extent of our powers, fallen as we are, is the ground and measure of our obligation."†

Professor Finney, among a multitude of negative propositions, has the following :—"It [Christian perfection] does not imply the same degree of knowledge that we might have possessed, had we always improved our time in its acquisition. The law cannot require us to love God or man as well as we might have been able to love them, had we always improved all our time in obtaining all the knowledge we could, in regard to their nature, character, and interests. If this were implied in the requisition of the law, there is not a saint on

\* Scripture Doctrine of Christian Perfection, p. 9.

† Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, &c., pp. 22, 23.

earth or in heaven that is or ever can be perfect. What is lost in this respect is lost, and past neglect can never be so atoned for as that we shall ever be able to make up in our acquisitions of knowledge what we have lost. It will, no doubt, be true to all eternity, that we shall have less knowledge than we might have possessed, had we filled up all our time in its acquisition. We do not, cannot, nor shall we ever be able to love God as well as we might have loved him, had we always applied our minds to the acquisition of knowledge respecting him. And if entire sanctification is to be understood as implying that we love God as much as we should, had we all the knowledge we might have had, then I repeat it, there is not a saint on earth or in heaven, nor ever will be, that is entirely sanctified.

“ It does not imply the same amount of service that we might have rendered, had we never sinned. The law of God does not imply or suppose that our powers are in a perfect state; that our strength of body or mind is what it would have been, had we never sinned. But it simply requires us to use what strength we have. The very wording of the law is proof conclusive that it extends its demands only to the full amount of what strength we have. And this is true of every moral being, however great or small.

“ It does not require the same degree of love that we might have rendered, but for our ignorance. We certainly know much less of God, and therefore are much less capable of loving him; that is, we are capable of loving him with a less amount, and to a less degree, than if we knew more of him, which we might have done but for our sins. And as I have before said, this will be true to all eternity; for we can never make amends by any future obedience or diligence for this

any more than for other sins. And to all eternity, it will remain true, that we know less of God, and love him less than we might and should have done, had we always done our duty. If entire sanctification, therefore, implies the same degree of love or service that might have been rendered, had we always developed our powers by a perfect use of them, then there is not a saint on earth or in heaven that is or ever will be in that state. The most perfect development and improvement of our powers must depend upon the most perfect use of them. And every departure from their perfect use is a diminishing of their highest development, and a curtailing of their capabilities to serve God in the highest and best manner. All sin, then, does just so much toward crippling and curtailing the powers of body and mind, and rendering them, by just so much, incapable of performing the service they might otherwise have rendered.”\*

Now upon these and similar positions the Oberlin divines are charged by their opponents with “letting down the law of God.”† And it does appear to me that they are logically liable to this charge. For in speaking of the standard of holiness, they always refer to “the law;” and Christian perfection they make out “that state of devotedness to God and his service required by the moral law,” and this same “moral law” does not require, according to Prof. Finney, “the same degree of knowledge,” nor “the same amount of service,” nor “the same degree of love” that “we might have rendered, had we never sinned.” I shall resume the subject of the law upon a future occasion. My only object at present is, to present the peculiarities of the Oberlin

\* Lecture I. Oberlin Evangelist, vol. ii, pp. 3, 4.

† See a communication from the synod of Genesee, dated Lockport, Oct., 1840. New-York Observer.

system, not to controvert them, but to see wherein they differ from the Wesleyan theory.

The Oberlin divines have met with two classes of opponents. One, as Dr. Snodgrass and the Princeton Review, deny the *attainableness* of this state of perfection altogether in the present life. But Dr. Woods, Dr. Pond, the Biblical Repository, and the New-York Evangelist, admit the *attainableness*, but *deny the fact* of this perfection ; or they admit that the perfection asserted by the Oberlin divines is *attainable*, but deny that any ever have attained it, or that any ever will hereafter attain it in this life. The following is Dr. Woods' position upon the subject :—

“ Mr. Mahan represents it as a question on which his opinion differs from the one commonly entertained : ‘ whether we *may* now, during the progress of the present life, attain to entire perfection in holiness.’ (Discourses, p. 15.) And in his second discourse he makes it his particular inquiry, *whether a state of complete holiness is attainable in the present life*. He informs us that he does not use the words *attainable* and *practicable* with reference merely or chiefly to our natural powers as intelligent, accountable agents, but with reference to the provisions of divine grace. And he lays it down as a truth, which distinguishes his system from the one generally held, that ‘ complete holiness is, in the highest and most common acceptation of the term, *attainable*.’ And in the last number of the Repository, (p. 409,) he states it as a point peculiar to him and his party, ‘ that we *may* render to God the perfect obedience which he requires.’ But we hold to this as much as he does, and, as I suppose, on the same conditions ; that is, we *may* render perfect obedience, if we apply ourselves to the work *as we ought*, and *fully avail ourselves* of the gracious provisions of the gos-



pel. He surely would not say that we may render perfect obedience in any other way.

“I must therefore protest here, as I did in the former case, against Mr. Mahan’s claiming that, as belonging peculiarly and exclusively to him, and to those who agree with him, which belongs equally to others. We hold, as decidedly as he does, that, in the common acceptance of the term, complete holiness is *attainable* in the present life. When we assert that a thing is *attainable*, or *may* be attained, our meaning is, that a proper use of means will secure it; that we shall obtain it, if we do what we ought; and that, if we fail of obtaining it, truth will require us to say we *might* have obtained it, and that our failure was owing altogether to our own fault. The *attainableness* of any thing surely does not mean the same thing as its being *actually obtained*. For it is very common to speak of many things—for example, the improvement of the mind, and a state of competence—as things which are *attainable*, or which *may* be obtained, but which never are obtained. The same as to the blessings of the gospel. Mr. Mahan would doubtless say, as others do, that salvation is *attainable* by all who hear the gospel; that under the dispensation of grace, any and all sinners *may* be saved; meaning, that means and opportunities are provided; that the way is prepared; that salvation is freely offered to them on the most reasonable terms; that a proper conduct on their part will secure the blessing, and that if they do not obtain it, they themselves, and they only, will be the faulty cause of the failure. When we say a thing is *not attainable*, we mean that, whatever we may do, we cannot obtain it, and that our failing to obtain it will not be owing to any misconduct or neglect on our part. It is often, and truly represented, that impenitent sinners, at the

judgment day, will have the painful reflection that the blessedness of heaven was offered to them, and was put within their reach—that they *might* have been saved, but refused the infinite good.”\*

This is considered by Dr. Snodgrass and the Princeton Review, on the one hand, and by the Oberlin divines on the other, “as virtually giving up the matter in dispute.” And I see no reason for a doubt upon the subject. The simple question between the Reformed and the Remonstrants, and between Messrs. Wesley and Fletcher, and Messrs. Hill, Toplady, Martin, and others, was the *attainableness of a state of evangelical perfection in the present life*. For maintaining the affirmative of this question, Arminians have been considered heterodox, and branded with the offensive epithet of *perfectionists*. But it seems the Andover professor can take the position that “perfect conformity to the moral law” *is attainable in this life*, and be no perfectionist at all. The position of the good doctor and his coadjutors does really entitle them to a large share of the obloquy which orthodox Calvinists have ever heaped upon Arminians for the unpardonable sin of perfectionism; and in such company perhaps we should be content to suffer reproach, claiming however exemption from the charge of holding to the attainableness of *legal perfection*, a crime that Dr. Woods openly and explicitly confesses.

The doctor goes further, and maintains, “that devout Christians and orthodox divines have, in all ages, maintained this precious doctrine.”† Now here we must proceed with caution. Let it be noticed that the learned professor is speaking of *legal perfection*, for such he understands to be the perfection maintained by

\* An Examination of the Doctrine of Perfection, pp. 26–28.

† Ibid., p. 15.

President Mahan. With this understanding we demur at the declaration. The historical investigation we have passed through will show, as clear as light, that none but Pelagians, Romanists, Anabaptists, Ranters, &c., ever "maintained this doctrine." A *perfection* which consists in *perfect conformity to the original law* has ever been denied by "devout Christians and orthodox divines." I have given abundant evidence that this doctrine was denied and controverted by all the reformers, by the Reformed Churches, by the Remonstrants, and by Mr. Wesley and his coadjutors.

But if the doctor, by "orthodox divines," means Calvinistic divines, his assertion is most palpably erroneous: for these divines have steadily, from the days of the great Genevan reformer down to the present time, explicitly denied the attainableness in this life of the perfection required both by the *law* and by the *gospel*, and have, on the other hand, asserted the necessary continuance of sin in believers until death.

Calvin says: "There never has been a saint who, surrounded with a body of death, *could* attain to such a degree of love, as to love God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his mind."\*

Witsius says: "We are not to imagine that any one in this life *can* attain to that perfection which the law of God requires, that, living without all sin, he should wholly employ himself in the service of God."†

Mr. Romaine, in speaking of "the experience of every true believer," says: "He desires to keep his thoughts from wandering; he would have his whole heart engaged in the duty, but he *cannot*."‡

Mr. Toplady says: 'Such being the unrelaxing per-

\* Institutes, book ii, chap. vii, sec. v.

† Economy of the Covenants, vol. ii, pp. 55, 56.

‡ Treatise on Faith, p. 376.

fection which the law inflexibly requires, it necessarily follows that the supposition of possible perfection on earth is the most fanatic dream, and the most gigantic delusion which can whirl the brain of a human being.”\*

Dr. John Dick says : “The *possibility* of perfection in the present state could be conceived only by men who were ignorant of the Scripture and of themselves. They must first have lowered the standard of holiness. They must have narrowed and abated the demands of the divine law to meet their fancied attainments.”†

Rev. Charles Buck says : “There is a perfection of *degrees*, by which a person performs all the commands of God, with the full exertion of all his powers, without the least defect. This is what the law of God requires, but what the saints *cannot* attain to in this life.”‡

In addition to these authorities, I give the Westminster divines, and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. The language adopted by the latter from the former is as follows :—“Q. 149. *Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?* A. No man is able, either of himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.”§

Need I multiply passages from those whom Dr. Woods will not hesitate to acknowledge as “orthodox divines,” to prove that he has taken an untenable position, when he claims for the admission of the *attainableness* of this perfection the common consent of evangelical Christians? Until the learned professor

\* Works of Aug. Toplady, p. 141.

† Theology, vol. ii, p. 242.

‡ Theological Dictionary; article, Perfection.

§ Larger Catechism.

shall review his ground, and correct himself, he stands in an unenviable position. His facts are wholly unsupported, and his system, as a whole, liable to more objections, and has less support from the Scriptures, the formularies of faith adopted by Protestant Churches, and the published opinions of "orthodox divines" of all ages, than almost any other system of perfection which has ever been given to the world.

Did Dr. Woods and those who agree with him entertain the right notions of *Christian perfection*, we might well rejoice in their admission of its *attainableness*. But holding, as they do, to a *legal perfection*, the very theory which has always been opposed by orthodox Protestants, upon mature consideration of the matter I have come to the conclusion, for myself, that it is no special cause of joy to the believers in the doctrine of *evangelical perfection*.\* The temper, however, in which Dr. Woods writes is most kind—characterized by Christian meekness and charity.

But for the *logic* of this writer I cannot speak in so favourable terms. How the learned professor could persuade himself that he was doing justice to his opponent, when he applied his arguments to a proposition which he had not attempted to prove, is to me wholly unaccountable. Mr. Mahan had introduced numerous Scripture proofs, that a state of Christian perfection is attainable in this life. Dr. Woods seems to think that he has fully and logically refuted Mr. Mahan, when he has shown, by a laboured argument, that these arguments do not "certainly prove that believers *will ever* be completely sanctified." All this, constituting nearly

\* Not having then so fully investigated the character of the perfection which Dr. W. had in view, I was led on a former occasion to regard his concession in too favourable a light. See *Methodist Quarterly Review*, vol. i, p. 317.



one half of his reply, is as clear an instance of the sophism *Ignoratio Elenchi*, a *misapprehension of the question*, as can easily be found in the productions of any sophist. In this I must not be understood as interfering in the controversy between these gentlemen. I am not the apologist or defender of either one or the other, but a simple reporter of facts as they present themselves to my own mind.

How far the views of the Oberlin divines upon the metaphysical distinction so generally received by Calvinistic theologians between *natural* and *moral* ability go to modify their views of the subject of Christian perfection, I shall not attempt to determine.\* As far

\* Since writing the above, several late numbers of the Oberlin Evangelist have fallen in my way, which I had not before seen. In these Professor Finney presents views which are not only novel and eccentric, but several of them exceedingly objectionable. In a sermon by the professor,<sup>a</sup> "moral ability," "natural ability," and "gracious ability," are pronounced "distinctions" absolutely "nonsensical." As to the distinction of President Edwards, referred to in the text, and quite generally adopted by Calvinistic divines, this gentleman sustains the following propositions:—"Their *natural ability* is no ability at all—their *natural inability*, so far as morality or virtue is concerned, is no inability at all—their *moral ability* is no ability at all—their *moral inability* is an absolute *natural inability*." This, I suppose, will be quite sufficient evidence that he has broken loose from the trammels of new divinity in more points than one. But while he repudiates this cherished distinction of moral and natural ability, he is equally strong in his objections against the Arminian theory of *gracious ability*. This kind of ability he undertakes to prove "has no grace whatever in it." The reasoning by which he does this is perfectly sophistical. The gist of the argument is contained in the following:—"It is a first truth of reason, that moral obligation implies the possession of every kind of ability which is indispensable to render the required act possible. For example, if God requires me to fly, he must furnish me wings." In this way he makes it a matter of mere "*justice*" on God's part to give the

<sup>a</sup> Vol. iv, No. 18. August 31, 1842.

as I have been able to find, they are sufficiently explicit upon the necessity of *direct divine influence* in the actual accomplishment of the work of sanctification. I give the following from President Mahan as specimens :—

“We learn how to understand and apply such declarations of Scripture as the following:—‘Wash you, make you clean;’ ‘Make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit;’ ‘Let us cleanse ourselves from

power to do what he requires. The most charitable construction which can be put upon this argument is, that the preacher had so completely lost himself in a labyrinth of metaphysical speculations, as unintentionally to have reversed the regular order of antecedent and sequence.

We suppose, in the economy of grace, man is first restored to a new probation, and this new probation implies the means necessary to meet the conditions of the new covenant. The conditions required are based upon the provisions of this covenant. These provisions imply all the power, and gracious aid, necessary to enable man to comply fully with its terms. Now, is there no grace in placing the human family in a condition in which salvation is possible? Is there no grace in putting eternal life within their reach?

But the professor urges that “*justice* does demand that a moral being should possess the requisite ability, whatsoever that is, to do and be what he is commanded to do and be.” This would be a logical argument upon the supposition that God first commanded man to repent and believe the gospel, before any such thing as a gospel existed. In such a case we should naturally enough conclude that a gospel must then be provided to be believed, or the sinner could not be justly condemned for disobedience to the command. But this supposition has no foundation in fact. It is a mere phantom. It is reversing the natural order of things. Indeed, the argument by which the professor undertakes to prove the theory of *gracious* ability “nonsensical” is a perfect fallacy, and is as fairly entitled to be characterized by his own favourite epithets, “absurd and nonsensical,” as can well be imagined. The new covenant is a covenant of *grace*;—its provisions are *gracious* provisions;—the ability to avail ourselves of these provisions is *gracious* ability;—the whole superstructure, from the foundation to the head-stone, is *grace—grace!*

all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,' &c. The common impression seems to be, that men are required to do all this, in the exercise of their own unaided powers; and because the sinner fails to comply, grace comes in, and supplies the condition in the case of Christians. Now, I suppose that all such commands are based upon the provisions of divine grace. The sinner is not required to 'make himself clean,' or to 'make to himself a new heart,' in the exercise of his unaided powers, but by application to the blood of Christ, 'which cleanseth from all sin.' The grace which purifieth the heart is provided; the fountain, whose waters cleanse from sin, is set open. To this fountain the creature is brought, and because he may descend into it, and there 'wash his garments and make them white,' he is met with the command, 'Wash you, make you clean,' 'make to yourself a new heart and a new spirit,' and 'cleanse yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.' The sinner is able to make to himself a 'new heart and a new spirit,' because he can instantly avail himself of proffered grace. He does literally\* 'make to himself a new heart and a new spirit,' when he yields himself up to the influence of that grace. The power to cleanse from sin lies in the blood and grace of Christ; and hence, when the sinner 'purifies himself by obeying the truth through the Spirit,' the glory of his salvation belongs, not to him, but to Christ."†

"I would here say, that I have for ever given up all idea of resisting temptation, subduing any lust, appetite, or propensity, or of acceptably performing any service for Christ, by the mere force of my own reso-

\* I would rather say, he does *in some sense* make to himself a new heart. The expression in the text implies too much.

† Scripture Doctrine, pp. 91, 92.

lutions. If my propensities, which lead to sin, are crucified, I know that it must be done by an indwelling Christ. If I overcome the world, this is to be the victory, 'even our faith.' If the great enemy is to be overcome, it is to be done 'by the blood of the Lamb.' ”\*

It is often asked, with no little solicitude, Do the Oberlin divines receive the true Wesleyan doctrine of evangelical perfection? Is there any real difference between them and the Methodist standards upon the subject? I feel compelled to meet this question; and yet I fear I may not be fully understood, and that what I shall say may offend against some of the generation of God's dear children. I must, notwithstanding, make an effort to do justice to the question, though I can devote to it but a small space.

1. Be it observed, that a portion of the phraseology employed by these writers seems well to express the

\* Scripture Doctrine, pp. 189, 190. This, it would seem, is a clear declaration of entire dependance on *divine influence* for the efficiency in the great work of sanctification. But Professor Finney's commentary puts another face upon the whole matter. He says: "The atonement and divine influence were not necessary to make men *able* to do their duty, but to induce in them a willingness to do it."<sup>a</sup> The influence used by God in the whole work of salvation, according to this gentleman, is nothing more than "exerting influence over mind by and through the presentation of truth to the mind." This he calls "a divine moral suasion."<sup>b</sup> Mr. Finney says: "With many, to deny a physical divine influence in regeneration, to deny that the Spirit of God is employed to make men able, and [to hold, I suppose he means] that he only employs his agency in persuading them to be willing, is to deny the divine agency altogether." And then adds: "What do they mean? I am afraid of these men." Ah! my dear sir, and I am sorry to be obliged to say, that "these men" have no little reason to be "afraid of" *you*—afraid lest you should spoil others, as I fear you have spoiled yourself, with your vain philosophy, or ultra speculations.

<sup>a</sup> Oberlin Evangelist, vol. iv, No. 18.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid.

Wesleyan view. Such is the following: "Perfection in holiness implies a full and perfect discharge of our entire duty, of all existing obligations in respect to God and all other beings.—It is 'loving God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.' It implies the entire absence of all sinfulness, and the presence and all-pervading influence of pure and perfect love—the consecration of the whole being to God," &c. And the illustrations of this doctrine, and the arguments employed to prove it, are generally the same as are employed by us. And,

2. Much that they say upon the negative, viz., what Christian perfection is not, is in perfect accordance with the language of our standards.

3. But when they speak of perfection as "perfect obedience to the moral law," they leave the Wesleyan phraseology. I do not pretend to say precisely what they mean by this language, only that it is language *we* do not use; and, as it is generally understood, it is language which does not convey our notion of Christian perfection.\*

\* Still another objectionable feature in the Oberlin theology is, that it makes Christian perfection to consist in "disinterested benevolence," and this is something either wholly unintelligible or grossly absurd. The following are Professor Finney's explanations of this doctrine:—"If he [God] send your companions or children to hell, you will be under obligations to praise him for it. If he send your children, or even yourself, to hell, you will be under an eternal obligation to praise him for it. It will always be true that he did it because it was right, because the public good demanded it, and it was therefore his duty to do it."<sup>a</sup> Again he says: "If the rule of right, if the highest good of the universe demand that you be sent to hell, it is God's duty to send you there, and you have no right to object, but are bound to consent with all your heart."<sup>b</sup> It has now, it would

<sup>a</sup> Oberlin Evangelist, vol, iv, No. 19.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid.



4. When they urge that "the law cannot require us to love God or man as well as we might have been able to love them, had we always improved all our time in obtaining all the knowledge we could in regard to their nature, character, and interests,"—and that "the law of God does not imply or suppose that our powers are in a perfect state; that our strength of body or mind is what it would have been, had we never sinned," &c.; in all this they leave the Wesleyan track. Did they

seem, come to this:—that when you are prepared "to consent with all your heart" that God "should send your companions, your children, or even yourself, to hell;" should "the rule of right, the highest good of the universe, demand" it, you have then attained to that "disinterested benevolence" which is the sum of Christian perfection! And we must believe, too, that "it is God's *duty*" to do all this. The phraseology, perhaps, requires no remark. I believe, however, this gentleman is alone in assigning a "duty" to God.

This effort reduces a great practical truth to a mere speculation. And the speculation itself, as I said in the opening of this note, is either wholly unintelligible or grossly absurd. If the professor means that we must *now* be willing, should we *ultimately* prove unfaithful, that God should *finally* send us to hell, the great difficulty would be for most persons so to analyze their feelings as to be able to determine whether they had reached this point or not. Upon the first effort to do this, they would be likely to find that they were not *willing to be damned, under any circumstances*. And if their hearts were right with God, they would most certainly be unwilling to prove unfaithful, and, associating unfaithfulness and perdition, they would feel an instinctive dread and abhorrence of both. What, then, must be done? Must they be told that they cannot truly say, "Thy will be done," and "every thing short of this state of the will is rebellion," and consequently they are in the gall of bitterness?

But are we to understand that *now* being in a state of rebellion against God, and of course in the way to hell, we must *now* be willing that God should send us there, and when we are eternally damned, we are then "bound to consent with all our heart" to be so damned. The idea is revoltingly absurd. It is asserting that we are bound to do what, under the circumstances, is naturally and morally impossible. Is this the *perfection* of the gospel?

say this of the *gospel*, and not of the *law*, there would be no difference between us. All this is true of *the law of liberty*—of *the law of faith*, but we consider nothing of the kind can be said of the original law, without truly *lowering its claims*.

5. The phraseology here employed seems to tend toward a confounding of the law and the gospel—of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace; and makes salvation predicable of obedience to the law, contrary to the doctrine of St. Paul. I now only speak of the logical tendency of the language employed by these writers, not pretending that they adopt what seems to me to be the legitimate consequence of their positions.

6. But let us not forget that these divines do not profess to be Methodists, nor to derive their doctrine or phraseology from Methodist standards. We consequently cannot find fault with them for using their own terms, or such language as they think best adapted to express the sense of the Scriptures upon the subject. And though we cannot adopt that portion of their phraseology excepted to, yet, so far as we can, we should be happy to agree with them, and extend to them our sympathies and our fellowship.

My object in these remarks, if I know my own heart, is truly kind and brotherly. I rejoice to believe, that whatever difference there may be between us in the modes of expression sometimes employed, there may be a perfect agreement as to the doctrine of Christian perfection, and also as to its experience and practical influence.\* By this exhibition of the differences be-

\* So I charitably concluded, with all the light I then had, but I am now compelled to fear the case is otherwise. In addition to the evidence of views radically defective which I have referred to in preceding notes, I will here give another instance. Professor Finney

tween the Wesleyan and the Oberlin theories of perfection, I would answer three objects :—I would satisfy reasonable inquiries ; I would guard our own people against adopting hastily a phraseology which would

insists much that the state of mind which he calls Christian perfection is necessary to a state of gracious acceptance. In showing “ what is implied in being willing that God should do right,” the professor says : “ It implies the spirit of perfect benevolence. No man is willing that God should in all things do right, who is not disinterestedly and perfectly benevolent.”<sup>a</sup> Next he attempts to prove that “ this state of mind is indispensable to salvation ;” and under this head he says : “ There cannot possibly be any virtue or holiness in one who is unwilling that God should in all things do right.”<sup>b</sup> Again : “ Unless you are, according to your knowledge, as upright as God is, you are not willing he should do right, you are in rebellion against him, and cannot be in a state of justification with God.”<sup>c</sup> And in another place this author tells us explicitly, that “ nothing short of that state of the will that is for the time being as perfectly conformed to the will of God as is the will of the inhabitants of heaven can, by any possibility, be true religion.”<sup>d</sup>

Now, the logical conclusion from all this is, that a man is either “ as perfectly conformed to the will of God as the inhabitants of heaven ;”—“ according to his knowledge, as upright as God is ;”—or “ there cannot possibly be any virtue or holiness in” him ;—he is “ in rebellion against God, and cannot be in a state of justification.” This, as far as I can see, annihilates the doctrine of Christian perfection at once. According to these views, no man can be a Christian at all, unless he is one in the highest sense possible. And of course, there are no Christians in the world, or Christian perfection is an attainment common to them all. This, I say, is sweeping away the doctrine of Christian perfection with a stroke. With these notions we can neither hold any fellowship nor make any compromise. And if this is the point to which the Oberlin divines have finally arrived, and if they have deliberately settled upon it, we must, though reluctantly, conclude, that after all they have said correctly upon the subject of Christian perfection, they have finally taken up views essentially defective, and views with which, as Wesleyans, we can have no sympathy.

<sup>a</sup> Oberlin Evangelist, vol. iv, No. 19.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid.

<sup>c</sup> Ibid.

<sup>d</sup> Vol. iv, No. 15.

make them inconsistent with themselves ; and I would invite a review and a more complete exposition of the points involved.

I must now close this lecture. The present state of the controversy may be gathered from the sequel of these lectures.

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## LECTURE X.

### OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION CONSIDERED.

“Come now, and let us reason together.” Isa. i, 18.

- THE purpose of this lecture shall be to examine several leading objections which are urged against the doctrine of Christian perfection.

1. It is urged that this doctrine is a part of the great heresy brought in by Pelagius, and cherished through the dark ages, and still rife in the Church of Rome.

In an article on “Christian Perfection” in “the Christian Review,” published in Boston under the auspices of the Baptist denomination, we have these statements :—“Pelagianism produced perfectionism ; perfectionism demands Pelagianism for its support ; it can flourish in no other soil ; it cannot be engrafted upon our evangelical scheme ; it can derive thence no congenial nourishment ; it may adhere for a while to the surface ; but must ultimately be thrown off by the very action of vitality. Wherever we find it growing in luxuriance, we may therefore know the nature of the soil upon which we tread. Before the evangelical church can admit perfection into her creed, she must tear up from their old foundations some of her most important and long-cherished doctrines. She must

modify her whole views of human depravity, of the nature of regeneration, of the Spirit's influence, and of the holiness of the divine law. She must allow either that grace is nothing but the free use of our faculties ; or, that it is conferred according to human merit ; and the final step must be to exchange the doctrine of justification by faith for that which teaches that there is no reconciliation to God without a perfect obedience to the law." "Doubtless, the advocates of perfectionism will not deny that they have adopted, in the main, the Pelagian scheme. Some additions there may be, but surely no improvement. We do not intimate by this, that they call any man master ; they may be allowed the honour of entire originality ; for there are cycles in human thought as well as in the planetary system ; opinions rise and set, as the stars ; and when the circling years bring round old errors, there are always congenial minds to which they will present themselves, as bearing all the characteristics of original and far-reaching thought. Perfectionism is again to have its day ; and we regret to find that, in certain sections, its baneful influences are already visible, so much so as to strengthen the natural apprehension that the evil consequences which have hitherto attended this doctrine are destined to attend it still."\*

It will be quite sufficient, in reply to this objection, to advert to the radical difference between the Pelagian and the Wesleyan theories. One presents a strictly *legal* perfection—perfect conformity to the law ; while the other sets forth an evangelical perfection—perfect conformity to the terms of the gospel. One denies the doctrine of the native corruption of the human heart and the direct influences of the Spirit ; while the other asserts these doctrines most explicitly and constantly.

\* No. for June, 1842.



One holds that perfection may be attained through the efforts of mere natural ability; the other utterly rejects this doctrine, as contrary to God's word, and on the other hand steadily asserts that, so far from being able perfectly to keep the law through the force of our natural powers, we can absolutely do nothing good "without the grace of God by Christ preventing (or going before) us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will."\* And finally, one system holds the merit of works; while the other denounces that doctrine as heretical, and predicates all hope upon the merits of Jesus Christ.

Now, in all candour, I ask any intelligent and unprejudiced person to point out the smallest family likeness between the two theories. I know they both employ the word *perfection*, and assert that it is in a sense predicable of man in his present state. And does not the Bible do the same? and are not our opponents compelled to admit it? And have we not seen that Augustine and Turretin, and the reformers generally, do the same? All admit perfection in some sense. Is the Bible, then, a system of Pelagianism and Romanism? Were the reformers Pelagians and Romanists? Is Dr. Woods a Pelagian? The charge of Pelagianism does, indeed, on several points in which Wesleyan Methodists totally disagree with him, seem to lie against the Andover professor. The perfection he admits is a *legal perfection*. And he maintains that we may attain this perfection by *natural ability*. Nor should it be forgotten that the "new school divines" generally, if I understand them, as clearly and as fully as did Pelagius himself, deny the doctrine of *hereditary depravity*, and assert that *all sin* consists in *voluntary*

\* See Art. viii, Articles of Religion, Doctrine and Discipline of the M. E. Church.

action. And I understand the Christian Review to follow in the wake of this class of divines.

Now, how well it becomes the gentlemen who hold these dogmas to charge Pelagianism upon us, I leave for the candid to judge. It is a cheap way to meet an opponent or put down a theory, to give it a bad name, or in some way bring it under public odium. It is, however, much more consistent with Christian candour, and with the principles of fair and honourable discussion, to meet what we would oppose upon the ground of its own merits; to direct our inquiries solely to the question, *Is it true?* Upon this ground Wesleyan Methodists have never shrunk from the field of discussion. And whenever their opponents may wish to meet them here, they will not find themselves in the quiet possession of the ground. We have learned "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," and we shall probably continue to practise upon the lesson so often as need may require: always, however, allowing our opponents the liberty to think for themselves, though never the privilege of misrepresenting us. Now let the gentleman of the Christian Review fully understand that as Wesleyans we do most explicitly "deny" that we "have adopted in the main the Pelagian scheme." We also deny the smallest tendency in our system to that "scheme;" his confident assertion to the contrary notwithstanding.

2. It is objected that perfectionism is always identified with fanaticism. Instances in proof are given from the history and extravagance of the *Cathari*\* of primitive times, the *Anabaptists*, *Familists*, *Ranters*, &c.

\* This is an appellation by which the Novatians of the third century were distinguished. This party was originated by Novatus, a presbyter of Africa and Novatianus, a presbyter of Rome, who, it is alleged,

Upon this objection I will make three observations. The *first* is, that there probably was some wheat among the chaff in all these classes of errorists : how much, we can now scarcely tell, for they do not speak for themselves through the pages of history, but are generally reported by their enemies. *Secondly*. While they by vile arts procured himself to be made a bishop. Their distinguishing doctrine was, “ that the *lapsed* upon no conditions of repentance whatsoever ought to be received again into the peace and communion of the church.” They inveighed, probably not without much reason, against the Catholics, as they called themselves, on account of the want of discipline, and separated themselves from those who had apostatized, and those who connived at them. They were finally excommunicated as heretics and schismatics. They were called, or, as my authority says, styled themselves, “ *Cathari*, the pure, undefiled party.”

That Novatianus was not so bad a man as he is sometimes represented to have been, we may infer from what St. Cyprian says of him. He only charges him with *schism*, supposing this to be a sufficient reason for placing upon him the seal of reprobation. Says he : “ As to the person of Novatianus, dearest brother, of whom you desire some account, and the heresy he has introduced, I must tell you, in the first place, that I don't look upon myself obliged to be very inquisitive what it is he teaches, since he teaches it in schism : for whoever he is, or however gifted, he is no Christian, I am sure, while he is not in the church of Christ. Let him value himself as much as he pleases, and pride himself in his philosophy and eloquence ; yet he who holds not to the brotherhood, and the unity of the church, has forfeited even all he was before.”<sup>a</sup>

Milner, after an examination of the subject at some length, comes to the following conclusions in relation to the *Cathari* :—“ We seem, however, by comparing together several fragments of information, to have acquired some distinct ideas of these *Cathari* : they were a plain, unassuming, harmless, and industrious race of Christians, condemning, by their doctrine and manners, the whole apparatus of the reigning idolatry and superstition, placing true religion in the faith and love of Christ, and retaining a supreme regard for the divine word.”<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> See Reeves' translation of the Apologies of Justin Martyr, &c., *note*, vol. ii, p. 360.

<sup>b</sup> History of the Church, chap iii, cent. xii.

held many errors, they certainly held some truths; and it is not to be presumed that, if they chanced to acknowledge some doctrine of the gospel, that in consequence it thenceforward became vitiated. And *finally*. As far as the evidence of history speaks intelligibly, the perfection held by these fanatics, like that held by some of our own times, and in our own country, was either a *mystical* perfection, consisting in a fancied union with Christ, and a spiritual transformation to a sort of angelic nature, or an *Antinomian* perfection, which consists in the abrogation or destruction of all law, and a consequent exemption from its claims.\*

So that to these classes of perfectionists Wesleyan Methodists hold as distant a relationship as they do to the various classes of Pelagians. Indeed, no stronger evidence of the truth of this conclusion can in reason be asked than that furnished by the writings of Mr. John Wesley. The perfection held by him is as consistent with a sound state of the mental faculties as it is productive of a sober and devout life. Those who hold it may in some instances be fanatics, and so may those who hold any other doctrine of the Bible. For this we are not responsible, unless it can be shown that the doctrine as held by us legitimately tends to fanaticism.

\* Perhaps I might safely have left the *Anabaptists* out of the question, as they will probably be safe in the hands of our friend of the Christian Review. Whether they were such *fanatics* and *perfectionists* as is pretended by some of the later reformers, and by several historians, is a matter of a little more interest to him than to me. It is, indeed, well for the church and the world, that the respectable denomination which claim to have descended from this class of Christians have retained their orthodox principles without inheriting their *fanaticism*, and especially that they totally discard the heresy of *perfectionism*, which, it is said, constituted so prominent a part of their creed.

3. It is alleged that this doctrine of perfection was opposed by the pious reformers, who asserted with one voice, "perfection is not *attainable* ; it is *impossible*."\*

As to the reformers, I have already given sufficient evidence that their opposition was principally directed against a species of perfection that we have no more fellowship for than they had, or than our opponents now have. But the evidence is abundant that these writers, after Augustine and Jerome, did admit a qualified perfection. Turretin, as we have seen, admits several kinds of perfection ; and Beza, in answer to the objection made to his argument against *legal* perfection, that "the faithful are said to be perfect in this life," says : "There is a twofold perfection ; the one incomplete, the which is an endeavour or care to obey God in the observation of his precepts : the other is termed complete ; this is the justice which the law requireth, namely, a perfect and absolute justice, according to that measure which man performed to God in his innocence. In the first sense the saints are said to be perfect, not in the last."† Now, what is all this but clearly asserting the doctrine of Christian perfection ? And a volume might easily be made of similar quotations from the same class of writers.

It is not pretended, however, that in their specific explanations the reformers give us the whole of the Wesleyan system upon the subject. But we think it no greater sin to differ from them in the mode of stating this doctrine than when they follow Augustine, as most of those our opponents call *reformers* do, upon the subject of predestination, partial atonement, and unconditional perseverance. Upon all these points we choose to go to the Bible for our light.

\* Christian Review, June, 1842, p. 242.

† Golden Chaine, p. 190. 4to. 1597.



4. It is asserted that perfection is not predicable of humanity in the present life. The weaknesses and frailties of human nature absolutely forbid it.

Let it be noted here, in the first place, that Wesleyan Methodists do not hold a perfection which excludes the infirmities of human nature, and which implies perfect obedience to the Adamic law; but the perfection they hold excludes the *turpitude* of human nature, and implies *loving God with all the heart*. This qualification, however, avails nothing with our opponents, for they consider the loving God with all the heart the same thing as perfect and unsinning obedience to the original law of purity, and of course deny the one as strongly as they do the other.

Calvin says: "Our assertion, respecting the impossibility of observing the law, must be briefly explained and proved; for it is generally esteemed a very absurd sentiment, so that Jerome has not scrupled to denounce it as accursed. What was the opinion of Jerome I regard not; let us inquire what is truth. I shall not here enter into a long discussion of the various species of possibility: I call that impossible which has never happened yet, and which is prevented by the ordination and decree of God from ever happening in future. If we inquire from the remotest period of antiquity, I assert that there never has existed a saint who, surrounded with a body of death, could attain to such a degree of love as to love God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his mind; and, moreover, that there never has been one who was not the subject of some inordinate desire."\*

From this passage it appears clearly that Calvin denied the *practicability* of perfect obedience to the law of love. Dr. Woods admits the *practicability* of this

\* Institutes, book ii, chap. vii, sec. 5.

obedience, but denies the *fact* that any ever have attained, or ever will attain to such obedience. But the great Geneva master denies both ; and, in direct contradiction of Dr. Woods and other new-divinity writers, “calls that *impossible* which has never happened yet, and which is *prevented by the ordination and decrees of God.*” In this respect I conceive the great master far more consistent than his disciples. But not to dwell here.

My object in introducing this passage at present is to present fairly, and from the highest authority, the proposition which I intend to controvert ; that is, “that *there never has existed a saint who, surrounded with a body of death, COULD attain to such a degree of love as to love God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his mind.*”

I suppose that the heart, soul, mind, and strength, embrace the whole intellectual and moral man—the intellect, sensibilities, and the will, and that our capability to love God is co-extensive with these powers and susceptibilities of the mind ; that capability implies power or ability ; and that we *can* do any thing that we have power or ability to do. Consequently, to say that a man *cannot* love God with all his heart, &c., is the same as to say that he cannot love God with all his power, or ability, which is the same as to say that a man has power to love God, and has not power to love God—or that he can love God, and that he cannot love God at the same time, which is a contradiction. If the assertion were that no man can love God with *more* than all his heart, no one would object—this would not in the least conflict with our hypothesis. We never, as Wesleyan Methodists, could be capable of advancing a doctrine so unphilosophical and dishonourable to God, as that man is required to render, or is capable

of rendering, an obedience entirely above the scope and strength of his moral nature ; but that he can come up to that mark we fully believe. And to deny this we consider absurd in the extreme. It amounts to just this, that man *cannot attain* to what he *can attain* to !

5. It is objected that there are no examples of this perfection in the history of man since the fall.

In answer to this objection it may be observed, first, that if the fact asserted in the objection were conceded, the attainableness of perfection might still be maintained ; for to prove any thing attainable we are not bound to prove that some one has attained it : though, on the other hand, proving that some one has attained to a state, proves also that it is attainable. And the fact that perfect Christians are recognised in the Scriptures, has generally, in this discussion, been adduced in proof of the attainableness of Christian perfection ; for it is a necessary logical consequence, that if any have attained to this state, others similarly circumstanced may make the attainment. The objection then is wholly irrelevant, and may be left here. But as the fact of the existence of perfect Christians is a valid affirmative argument on our side, I shall resume the consideration of it when I come to adduce proof positive of the proposition, that Christian perfection is attainable in this life.

6. It is objected, that “ the *nearer* Christians arrive to perfection in the present world, *the further* they seem to themselves to be from it.”\*

No wonder the author of this objection thinks “ this may appear paradoxical to some.” I presume it would appear so to himself, if his vision were not obscured by the mist of prejudice. His cases are not to the point ; they only prove that when a person is divinely enlight-

\* Dr. Pond. See Biblical Repository, vol. i, p. 54.

ened, his self-righteousness leaves him. He had previously thought himself very good ; but now he sees himself as he is. But supposing him to go on from this point ; to leave “the principles of the doctrine of Christ,” and “go on to perfection,” does he seem to himself every moment to recede from it ? When St. Paul said, “Forgetting the things which are behind, I press toward the mark,” &c., did he seem to himself to be going back ? I doubt this. And though I do not question that the holier men are here, the more they see and feel their dependance, and the more they loathe and abhor themselves ; yet it is not so plain to me that they do not make *sensible* advances ; that their faith is not strengthened, their hopes brightened, and their joys enhanced in proportion as they advance in holiness.

7. It is objected that we hasten the work of sanctification to too sudden a conclusion. The Christian Review says : “We have supposed that Christian growth, like physical, must be gradual ; that the believer goes from strength to strength, and from grace to grace ; that, in the progress of religion within him, he gains victory after victory over self and sin, and tramples in the dust one spiritual foe after another, until he comes to the measure of the stature of the fulness of his Lord. We had supposed it unsafe to affirm that any evil passion was wholly crushed, which circumstances might resuscitate. The sleeping lion may rush again from the lair, where he lay calm and still, as if he had been dead. But if Mr. Wesley’s theory be true, we have found a royal road to holiness.”\*

Our objector does well in supposing a growth in holiness, and that the Christian “gains victory after victory”—all this is true, and as true of a person wholly sanctified as of any one else. But as to his “sleeping

\* No. xxviii, p. 412.

lion," there is a little more doubt. Mr. Toplady says : "I do not know whether the strivings of inherent corruption for mastery be not frequently more violent in a regenerate person than even one who is dead in trespasses : as wild beasts are sometimes the more rampant and furious for being wounded."\*

Mr. Toplady supposes "inbred corruption in a regenerate person" to be "wounded" indeed, but still "rampant and furious;" but our reviewer represents it as only *asleep*—lying "calm and still as if it had been dead." But neither of these views seem to answer to those of the apostle, who says : "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin," Rom. vi, 6. Here the *beast* is neither quietly *asleep*, nor *rampant* and *furious*, but *crucified*. The lion is wounded indeed, but it is with so deep and deadly a thrust that he is struggling in the agonies of death. The body of sin is not merely put to sleep or bound with cords, but *nailed to the cross*, where mortality is rapidly carrying on its work.

As to this "royal road to holiness," a few remarks may be proper. The notions sustained by the objector are, that it must be *a long time* ere the Christian can attain to entire holiness : for "Christian growth, like physical, must be gradual." The fact is in a sense true, but it does not prove his point. We make no question as to the gradual growth of a Christian, either before or after his entire sanctification, but acknowledge and maintain the fact in relation to both periods. But the question we raise is, whether the body of sin in the Christian must necessarily *live*, and, if it is not "rampant and furious," at least be *asleep*, "calm and still," as long as he lives :—whether the work of de-

\* Caveat—Works, p. 321.



struction upon the members of this body must be slow, and of long continuance. Now, if this is so, there would be likely to be some Scripture warrant for the conclusion. But we know of no such warrant. On the contrary, the imagery employed to illustrate the progress and consummation of this work generally implies rapidity and despatch.

The process of *mortification* is employed to illustrate the process of entire sanctification. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth," Col. iii, 5. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live," Rom. viii, 13. Now, let mortification begin in a member of the human body, and, if not arrested, it very soon completes its work. The process is not slow and long, continuing for years.

Again, the process of *death by crucifixion* is employed in like manner to represent the process of the death of our corruptions. "Our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed," Rom. vi, 6. Now, but a few hours are necessary for the consummation of the process of crucifixion, and it *could* not, in the nature of the case, be *protracted*.

*Cleansing the leper* seems to be employed in the same way. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean," Psa. li, 7. This process, too, was short, not occupying, inclusive of all the ceremonies prescribed, but a few days.

The process of *refining metals* is employed to the same purpose. "I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin," Isa. i, 25. This, I need not say, is not a long and tedious process, but is soon accomplished.

Lastly, the process of *leaven working in a mass of meal* is employed to represent the process of transforming the heart. "The kingdom of heaven is like

unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened," Matt. xiii, 33. This process, as in all the preceding cases, is very soon completed.

Now it is very probable our reviewer would have selected another class of figures to represent the progress of the work of sanctification. Mr. Toplady has an illustration which would doubtless suit him much better. He says: "Naturalists tell us that the oak is a full century in growing to a state of maturity: yet, though perhaps the slowest, it is one of the noblest, the strongest, and the most useful trees in the world. How preferable to the flimsy, watery, shooting willow!"\* And lest the oak should too soon come to maturity, it might, forsooth, be best to have worms breed in its roots, and "snakes and toads nestle" in its heart!

But seriously, I am afraid of these illustrations. For in the first place, they are not taken from the Scriptures: and in the next place, I fear they may have a tendency too much to retard the work of sanctification. If the reviewer is fearful lest we should bring forward this work too rapidly, I confess my fear is lest he should make it progress too slowly; or, by preventing all growth, should destroy it altogether—which may God, in his mercy, prevent!

8. It is objected that the tendency of the doctrine of Christian perfection is decidedly injurious to the interests of true religion. The Princeton Review holds the following language upon the subject:—

"Perfectionism, indeed, can never bear a rigid and impartial scrutiny, as to its visible effects, any more than as to the radical principles which produce them. Its grapes, however beautiful in the eye of the distant

\* Caveat—Works, p. 321.

or cursory spectator, are still the grapes of Sodom; and its clusters are the clusters of Gomorrah. In proportion to the developments which are made, new evidence is afforded, that this heresy, however diversified, or modified by circumstances, is everywhere the same in its essential features, and in its tendency; arrayed alike against evangelical doctrine and order; fostering fanaticism and spiritual pride; and, whether it nominally acknowledge or reject the ordinances of the gospel, taking away the grounds which support them, and robbing them of the salutary influence which, in their legitimate use, they are adapted and designed to exert.”\*

This is said in immediate connection with several severe charges against the Oberlin professors, but, it would seem, is designed for general application, as the reviewer refers it to the “heresy, however diversified, or modified by circumstances.” So far as the reviewer would bring his charges to bear upon the Wesleyan theory of perfection, perhaps we may safely leave it to God and the world to judge whether “its grapes are the grapes of Sodom; and its clusters the clusters of Gomorrah.” Indeed, I should not fear much to leave it to the candour of the reviewer himself, to judge of the justice of his own charges, if he would take the trouble to acquaint himself accurately with the practical influence of this doctrine among the Methodists. It is lamentable to see a writer of so much power, as this reviewer evidently is, close his eyes and strike at random. But we must forgive him, for he means well, though he does an act of cruel injustice.

I would here beg leave to oppose to the sweeping censures of the Review, the opinions of the celebrated Alexander Knox, who was no Methodist, but had the

\* No. for July, 1842, p. 470.

candour to give even Methodists their due. In his correspondence with Bishop Jebb, letter 18, he says: "In fact, I do think, that to err on the side of good nature will always be safest; and besides, I am persuaded, that the Methodists, as a body—the Wesleyans I mean—deserve far more credit for what they believe rightly, than censure for what they think erroneously. And, particularly, their doctrine of perfection, in my mind, merits peculiar delicacy of treatment: the truth and excellence of it being most substantial; and the fault of it being, rather infelicity of expression, and misconception about some circumstances, than any radically false view."

And in letter 19 he resumes the subject; and though the letter was not finished, his judgment upon the subject is clearly expressed, and in language, too, which shows most conclusively that it was not made up in the dark. Thus he proceeds:—

"I would ask any person of seriousness and candour, who knows well the ecclesiastical history of Britain during the by-past century, where would, or what would, our religion at this day be, if the Methodists had not made their appearance? With all their foibles, I own I think they have been grand instruments of good, far beyond the limits of their own societies. I feel this, I hope, not without gratitude to the Author and Giver of all good things; and, therefore, am most cordially disposed myself, and cannot avoid persuading others, to deal gently and indulgently with them. Not, surely, to overlook their errors; but to touch them with all possible mildness, so as to compel, both themselves, and all others, to feel, that it was love of truth alone, and not any unkind temper, which dictated the censure.

"But I have another motive for such caution respecting the Wesleyan Methodists; and that is, that I really

do think them so wonderfully right, in most of their views, as to render them, on the whole, much more the object of my estimation than my blame. Nay, the very point you look at in them—I mean, their view of Christian perfection—is, in my mind, so essentially right and important, that it is on this account, particularly, I value them, above other denominations of that sort. I am aware that ignorant and rash individuals expose what is in itself true, by their unfounded pretensions, and irrational descriptions; but, with the sincerest disapproval of every such excess, I do esteem John Wesley's stand for holiness to be that which does immortal honour to his name. And I am assured, too, that, while numbers in the Methodist society abuse his doctrine, (to which his stress on sudden revolutions in the mind has, I think, contributed,) perhaps a still greater number (but a great number, I am sure) are excited, by what he has taught, to such inward and outward strictness, such deep self-denial, and such substantial piety and spirituality, as are scarcely to be found in any other society. In John Wesley's views of Christian perfection are combined, in substance, all the sublime morality of the Greek fathers, the spirituality of the mystics, and the divine philosophy of our favourite Platonists. Macarius, Fénelon, Lucas, and all of their respective classes, have been consulted and digested by him; and his ideas are, essentially, theirs. But his merit is, (after all just allowances for mixtures of the fanatical kind,) that he has popularized these sublime lessons in such a manner, in his and his brother's hymns, that he . . . . (*Unfinished.*)”\*

The *abuses* of the doctrine, referred to by Mr. Knox, it is highly probable, were real, and they might, indeed,

\* See Thirty Years' Correspondence between John Jebb, &c., and Alexander Knox, &c., vol. i, pp. 98, 100, 101.



have originated from a misconception of Mr. Wesley's views of "sudden revolutions in the mind." But no one was more ready to detect and correct these errors than was Mr. Wesley himself. We do not deny but the same species of fanaticism which was so troublesome to the founder of Methodism is sometimes found among the Methodists in our own country in connection with strong professions of holiness. I have not the least disposition to conceal or disguise any facts of this kind. But cannot these things be accounted for without reckoning them the legitimate fruits of our views of Christian perfection? A little examination will, I think, in all such cases, trace the source of these aberrations to the faults of the mental constitution, the education, or the habits of the subject. I am happy also to say in this connection, that I see no disposition in the Methodist ministry, or the great mass of the people, to foster, or even to tolerate, such instances of fanaticism. They are consequently, with us, "like angels' visits, few and far between."

9. It is objected, "That to suppose the state in question to be attainable, would be to suppose that which would *disagree* with a variety of *known* and *acknowledged facts*."

This objection is given in the words of *Dr. Snodgrass*, who sustains it by several particulars, which I shall now proceed to examine.

1. The learned doctor says: "It is a fact, that the strongest representations of *Christian experience and practice*, which are found in the Bible, are those which expressly exclude the notion of sinless perfection in this life, and include the idea of an onward movement to still higher degrees of proficiency and success."\*

This argument proceeds upon the assumption that a

\* Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, p. 70.

state of entire sanctification admits of no *advancement*. Whether this is true or not of the theory Dr. Snodgrass more particularly opposes, I shall not be careful to inquire, but shall show, in few words, that it is not true in relation to the theory sustained in these lectures.

It will be remembered that we have found sanctification to imply both the *death of sin*, and the *life of righteousness*. And when we speak of entire sanctification, as to the former part of it, we say it may be attained *at once*—*it is an instantaneous work*, and we are authorized to look for its accomplishment *now*. And it must be admitted, that when this work is accomplished, it cannot in all future time be *more* than accomplished. But in relation to the latter part of this great work, viz., the life of righteousness, embracing *all holy affections*, and *pious efforts*, it is regarded as *entirely progressive*. There never will, during our earthly pilgrimage, and probably during eternity itself, be a point at which the redeemed soul will have reached a height of holiness which precludes further improvement. The destruction of sin in the soul, and the growth of holiness, are two distinct things, though inseparably joined together, and, united, constitute the grand divisions of the great work of entire sanctification. The one is instantaneous, the other gradual; and hence it is that we sometimes say, with propriety, that the work of entire sanctification is both gradual and instantaneous. So by a careful analysis of the subject, the theory is rescued from apparent contradiction. The objection then has no force against the Wesleyan theory.

2. "It is a fact, that *there is no degree of piety or holy living, in this world, beyond which Christians are exempted from AFFLICTIONS or TRIALS*; such exemption is neither contemplated in the word of God, nor

realized in actual experience ; and yet, nothing short of this would be suitable to a state of entire sanctification.”\*

It would be all that in justice could be demanded of us to show that we hold to the attainableness of no such state of perfection in this life as would exempt the possessor “from *afflictions* or *trials*.” And indeed I know not that such a state is held by any one in his right senses. If the objection has any force, it must be upon the supposition that afflictions are in all cases to be regarded as a punishment for existing turpitude. And this, indeed, seems to be the ground assumed by the objector. “All suffering,” says he, “of every kind, is the associate of sin.”† We freely admit, that suffering had never entered the system but for sin, and that sin is, in a sense, the cause of all suffering. But this by no means authorizes the conclusion that no one of the family of man can be freed from the guilt and the pollutions of sin without exemption from the physical evils to which humanity is heir, and which are entailed upon man while in this mortal state. I see no such conclusion legitimately following the premises. If, indeed, the objection be well-founded, how did it happen that Christ “was in all points tempted [and afflicted otherwise] like as we are, and yet without sin?”

3. “It is a fact, that *all Christians are directed to use THE MEANS of sanctification, as long as they live* ; there is no degree of holiness, in this life, supposed, in the word of God, to be attainable, beyond which they are represented as needless.”‡

Here the gentleman beats a creature of his own imagination. Who holds a state of sanctification that renders the means of further improvement, and of security against temptation, entirely nugatory ? If any

\* Page 76.

† Page 79.

‡ Page 80.

entertain this notion, certainly we do not. In answer to a former objection, I have shown that the state of entire sanctification is a state of indefinite progression, and certainly *means* are appropriate, at least while we continue to be acted upon and moved forward in our duty by the ordinary stimulants and influences. In his amplification the gentleman proceeds :—

“In view of the Christian life, considered as a warfare, believers are exhorted, in common, to ‘fight the good fight of faith’—to ‘put on the whole armour of God’—to ‘be sober’—to ‘stand fast’ and quit themselves like men—having their ‘loins girt about with truth’—their ‘feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace’—and their whole persons guarded by ‘the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.’ And do these sound like addresses to an army, some of whom have fought all their battles, have conquered all their enemies, have placed their feet upon the neck of their last foe, and are ready to begin the celebration of the victory? Or, do they proceed upon the supposition, that the war is still in progress—that the armour is still needed—and, that other triumphs over the foe are still to be sought?”\*

I wonder if the blessed Saviour had no conflicts with the powers of hell. Did he not maintain a conflict with the “devil” for “forty days in the wilderness?” And was he not assaulted upon “the pinnacle of the temple?” And was he not free from sin notwithstanding? And must the saints suffer the devil to occupy a part of their hearts, in order to afford them an opportunity to exercise their graces? Can there be no “warfare” without the remains of sin in the heart? This is strange, to be sure. I always supposed it was one thing to have the unclean spirit expelled, and another to keep him out.

And as we believe in no state of perfection in this life from which we are not liable to fall, and none that is not subject to the fiercest conflicts with the grand adversary of our souls, the objection is, so far as our theory is concerned, utterly without force.

4. "It is a fact, that, in the present world, *there are none who either do, or can arrive, at a PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH*; and as sanctification is *through* the truth, it is not easy to see, under these circumstances, how any can be perfectly holy."\*

Now this objection proceeds, so far as it has any application to the Wesleyan theory, upon the assumption that "*perfect knowledge*" is necessary to *perfect love*. This we deny. We do not at all question but the perfection of knowledge to which we shall attain in heaven will be the means of greatly augmenting our love and our happiness. But not holding a perfection that admits of no increase, we do not feel the force of the objection. What prevents a sanctified soul, though he *knows* "*but in part,*" of giving to God his little all? Because his power to love God, when he comes to heaven, is to be inconceivably greater than it now is, can he not now lay out the *whole amount* of the small stock of power he has? Alas for us! if this is legitimate reasoning upon the "great and precious promises" of God's word!

5. "It is a fact, that, *while Christians remain in the present world, they will have CORRUPTIBLE BODIES*; this part of their nature will remain, substantially, as it was at the commencement of their Christian course; and, in such a connection, it is not to be expected that they will arrive at a state of entire sanctification."†

That the saints will necessarily have "corruptible bodies," while they remain on earth, none doubt; but

\* Pages 83, 84.

† Page 87.



that they must consequently have *corrupt souls*—souls morally defiled by sin—is not so clear. The mortality of the body, and the moral pollution of the soul, are not things so inseparably connected as this objection would seem to imply. But our author seems to think that death has something to do in the great work of sanctification. Thus he proceeds :—

“The union between the body and the soul, and the nature and extent of their influence, the one upon the other, I am well aware, are intricate, and, in many respects, inexplicable subjects. The fact itself, however, that their reciprocal influence is not only real and great, but constant and necessary, all will admit. And, in view of this influence, as recognised in Scripture and felt in the experience of all, I cannot doubt that the dissolution of the body, as followed by its resurrection, is one of the appointed means of sanctification.”\*

Now we object utterly to this doctrine of a *death purgatory*. It is wholly unsupported by the word of God—and not only so, but it delays the consummation of the work of sanctification not only *until* death, but beyond that period, even to the “resurrection!” If “the death of the body, as followed by its resurrection, is the appointed means of sanctification,” surely the end cannot precede the means; and of course the sanctification of the spirit will not be completed until the resurrection of the body!! And where will this unsanctified spirit be all this time? No doubt, in some *limbus patrum*, undergoing the process of purification!!! It is lamentable that such doctrine as this should be soberly advanced by a sound Protestant divine, and that it should have so weighty a sanction as the “Presbyterian Board of Publication.”†

But though the statement above quoted and remarked

\* Pages 87, 88.

† See the title-page.

upon seems explicit, and utterly incapable of correction or mitigation, in other places the author seems slightly to swerve from his position. The following is an instance :—

“Surely, when the work of sanctification upon the soul is done, God will provide it with a better place of residence than this. It cannot be, that he will leave it any longer in such a situation—to ‘groan, being burdened’—to endure the lustings of the flesh—to be annoyed by the motions of sin, which proceed from the members—and to pass through successive stages and scenes of disease and pain. Instead of this, it is far more consistent to believe that, when perfectly delivered from sin, it will be emancipated at once—will put off the tabernacle in which it has lived while sojourning in this vale of tears—and rise to the mount, in which it is to be ‘clothed upon’ with another and a better ‘house, which is from heaven.’”\*

Here, instead of making death “the appointed means of sanctification,” our author tells us, “that when perfectly delivered from sin, it [the soul] will be emancipated at once—will put off the tabernacle,” &c. Now, it would seem, our author would some way, and by some means—he does not tell us by what or how—get the soul “perfectly delivered from sin” before death, and of course it would seem difficult for him to make death a “means of sanctification,” unless it can some way act by anticipation. That is, plainly enough, it must be a “means of sanctification” before it takes place. This is a new theory of cause and effect, or antecedent and sequence !

But I will leave these vagaries. I have no pleasure in exposing their absurdity. They are to me a source of unfeigned grief. I did suppose the old Romish, or

rather, more properly, Pagan, doctrine of *purgatory* long since exploded by all right-minded Protestants. I am not surprised to find it recognised in the formulas of faith put forth under the reign of Henry VIII., before the Reformation had extended to the system of Christian doctrine ; but to find it, in substance, at least, seriously advanced by a doctor of divinity of the Presbyterian Church, and officially sanctioned by that much-respected denomination of Christians, is almost too much to believe possible. The whole must be set down to the credit of a strong attachment to a theory, and an inconceivable horror of a most destructive error which our good Presbyterian brethren call “perfectionism,” and which has begun to make sad inroads upon the orthodoxy and purity of their church.

I say not these things through spite or resentment, but because I suppose the occasion calls for plain dealing, and nothing else will at all reach the case. And after all this, will our opponents find serious fault with us for representing them as pleading for sin, and detracting from the glory of the Saviour? Does not Dr. Snodgrass clearly make sin a sort of *necessary evil*—and call in death and the separate state to aid in its destruction? If these views are promotive of holiness in the church, and honourable to its great Head, I am not as yet able to see how this is the case. To me it is manifest that this theory is not a part and parcel of the gospel of reconciliation, but rather a human device ; and very much like many others, which have been palmed upon the Christian system without authority, and to its great prejudice.

Several objections yet remain to be considered ; but I have occupied so much time upon those already examined, that I must now close this lecture.

## LECTURE XI.

## OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE DOCTRINE—CONTINUED.

“But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.” Rom. vii, 6.

I AM still longer to be detained upon objections, which are, no doubt, very honestly presented by our opponents to the theory we maintain. Some of these are far more important than others, and of course must have a larger share of attention. The present lecture will be wholly occupied in the consideration of one which is thought to be utterly unanswerable. Of course I must take time to investigate it fully. It is supposed to lie against all the various theories of Christian perfection, and consequently is always presented as an insuperable obstacle in the way of the doctrine, however modified. Let us proceed to give it due attention.

10. It is objected, that the doctrine of the practicability of perfection dishonours God’s holy law, by lowering its claims to the level of human imbecility.

This objection would be valid against the doctrine of *legal* perfection, but is not applicable to the Wesleyan theory. It has indeed always been urged, as well against the latter as the former view by those who have arrayed themselves against the doctrine of Christian perfection. Indeed, it is asserted by an eminent divine,\* that the “scheme of perfection,” which con-

\* Rev. Dr. Pond. See Biblical Repository, second series, vol. i, page 45.

templates “fulfilling the whole divine law, contains more of truth than” either the system of “imputed perfection,” or that of “evangelical perfection.” So that we gain nothing with such opponents as he is by all our explanations and qualifications. Our theory of “evangelical perfection” more fully and unpardonably dishonours the law, than the old Pelagian dogma of *legal* perfection.

This learned author states the “evangelical” system thus :—

“The second class of perfectionists are those who claim what they call an *evangelical* perfection. They do not profess to obey perfectly the divine law, or think that this is at all necessary. The *moral* law has been superseded by the law of *faith*. It has been annulled, in whole or in part, and the milder and less rigorous requisitions of the gospel have taken its place. It is these milder requisitions that the *evangelical* perfectionist (as he chooses to term himself) professes to fulfil, and not the strict demands of the law.

“To this theory it is sufficient to reply, that the moral law has *not* been superseded or annulled, but is in *full force now throughout the universe*. Our Saviour came to vindicate and honour the law, not to annul it. The dispensation of mercy is based upon it, but does not supersede or abate one iota of its claims. No person can become interested in the grace of the gospel, till he consents to the entire law that it is good, and condemns himself for all his transgressions of it. We may frame for ourselves a standard of character, if we will, and live up to it, and call this *perfection*; but the Bible knows naught of such perfection. It is of no value in the sight of God.”\*

The gentleman says, according to the system of

\* See Biblical Repository, pp. 44, 45.



“evangelical perfection, the *moral* law has been superseded by the law of *faith* ;” but he does not tell us in what respects this “class of perfectionists” hold this to be the case. Had he gone into the details of the system, he would have found that upon this point there is no real difference between them and the Westminster divines, and indeed all the orthodox Calvinists who have written since the days of the Reformation. The simple sense in which Wesleyans hold that “the moral law has been superseded by the law of faith,” is *as the condition of human acceptance*. Wesley’s views upon this subject are clearly expressed in his Plain Account of Christian Perfection, as follows :—

“QUEST. 1. How is ‘Christ the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth?’ Rom. x, 4.

“ANS. In order to understand this, you must understand what law is here spoken of; and this, I apprehend, is, (1.) The Mosaic law—the whole Mosaic dispensation; which St. Paul continually speaks of as one, though containing three parts, the political, moral, and ceremonial. (2.) The Adamic law, that given to Adam in innocence, properly called ‘the law of works.’ This is in substance the same with the angelic law, being common to angels and men. It required that man should use, to the glory of God, all the powers with which he was created. Now, he was created free from any defect, either in his understanding or his affections. His body was then no clog to the mind; it did not hinder his apprehending all things clearly, judging truly concerning them, and reasoning justly, if he reasoned at all. I say, *if he reasoned*; for possibly he did not. Perhaps he had no need of reasoning, till his corruptible body pressed down the mind, and impaired its native faculties. Perhaps, till then,

the mind saw every truth that offered as directly as the eye now sees the light.

“Consequently this law, proportioned to his original powers, required that he should always think, always speak, and always act precisely right, in every point whatever. He was well able so to do: and God could not but require the service he was able to pay.

“But Adam fell; and his incorruptible body became corruptible; and ever since it is a clog to the soul, and hinders its operations. Hence, at present, no child of man can at all times apprehend clearly, or judge truly. And where either the judgment or apprehension is wrong, it is impossible to reason justly. Therefore it is as natural for a man to mistake as to breathe; and he can no more live without the one than without the other: consequently no man is able to perform the service which the Adamic law requires.

“And no man is obliged to perform it; God does not require it of any man; for Christ is the end of the Adamic, as well as the Mosaic law. By his death he hath put an end to both; he hath abolished both the one and the other, with regard to man; and the obligation to observe either the one or the other is vanished away. Nor is any man living bound to observe the Adamic more than the Mosaic law. (I mean it is not the condition either of present or future salvation.)

“In the room of this, Christ hath established another, namely, the law of faith. Not every one that doeth, but every one that believeth, now receiveth righteousness, in the full sense of the word; that is, he is justified, sanctified, and glorified.

“Q. 2. Are we then dead to the law?

“A. We are ‘dead to the law, by the body of Christ’ given for us; Rom. vii, 4; to the Adamic as

well as Mosaic law. We are wholly freed therefrom by his death, that law expiring with him.

“Q. 3. How, then, are we ‘not without law to God, but under the law to Christ?’ 1 Cor. ix, 21.

“A. We are without that law; but it does not follow that we are without any law: for God has established another law in its place, even the law of faith: and we are all under this law to God and to Christ; both our Creator and our Redeemer require us to observe it.

“Q. 4. Is love the fulfilling of this law?

“A. Unquestionably it is. The whole law under which we now are, is fulfilled by love, Rom xiii, 9, 10. Faith working or animated by love is all that God now requires of man. He has substituted (not sincerity, but) love, in the room of angelic perfection.

“Q. 5. How is ‘love the end of the commandment?’ 1 Tim. i, 5.

“A. It is the end of every commandment of God. It is the point aimed at by the whole and every part of the Christian institution. The foundation is faith, purifying the heart; the end love, preserving a good conscience.

“Q. 6. What love is this?

“A. The loving the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength; and the loving our neighbour, every man, as ourselves, as our own souls.

“Q. 7. What are the fruits or properties of this love?

“St. Paul informs us at large, love is long-suffering. It suffers all the weaknesses of the children of God; all the wickedness of the children of the world; and that not for a little time only, but as long as God pleases. In all, it sees the hand of God, and willingly submits thereto. Meantime it is kind. In all, and

after all, it suffers, it is soft, mild, tender, benign. 'Love envieth not;' it excludes every kind and degree of envy out of the heart: 'love acteth not rashly,' in a violent, headstrong manner, nor passes any rash or severe judgment: it 'doth not behave itself indecently;' is not rude, does not act out of character: 'seeketh not her own' ease, pleasure, honour, or profit: 'is not provoked;' expels all anger from the heart: 'thinketh no evil;' casteth out all jealousy, suspiciousness, and readiness to believe evil: 'rejoiceth not in iniquity;' yea, weeps at the sin or folly of its bitterest enemies: 'but rejoiceth in the truth;' in the holiness and happiness of every child of man. 'Love covereth all things,' speaks evil of no man; 'believeth all things' that tend to the advantage of another's character. It 'hopeth all things,' whatever may extenuate the faults which cannot be denied; and it 'endureth all things' which God can permit, or men and devils inflict. This is 'the law of Christ, the perfect law, the law of liberty.'

"And this distinction between the 'law of faith' (or love) and 'the law of works,' is neither a subtle nor an unnecessary distinction. It is plain, easy, and intelligible to any common understanding. And it is absolutely necessary, to prevent a thousand doubts and fears, even in those who do 'walk in love.'

"Q. 8. But do we not 'in many things offend all,' yea, the best of us, even against this law?

"A. In one sense we do not, while all our tempers, and thoughts, and words, and works spring from love. But in another we do, and shall do, more or less, as long as we remain in the body. For neither love nor the 'unction of the Holy One' makes us infallible: therefore, through unavoidable defect of understanding, we cannot but mistake in many things.

And these mistakes will frequently occasion something wrong, both in our temper, and words, and actions. From mistaking his character, we may love a person less than he really deserves. And by the same mistake we are unavoidably led to speak or act, with regard to that person, in such a manner as is contrary to this law, in some or other of the preceding instances.

“Q. 9. Do we not then need Christ, even on this account ?

“A. The holiest of men still need Christ, as their prophet, as ‘the light of the world.’ For he does not give them light, but from moment to moment: the instant he withdraws, all is darkness. They still need Christ as their king; for God does not give them a stock of holiness. But unless they receive a supply every moment, nothing but unholiness would remain. They still need Christ as their priest, to make atonement for their holy things. Even perfect holiness is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ.” Pp. 106–113.

Dr. Pond, in an effort to prove that the man who thinks himself already perfect will, almost of necessity, be led to lower the standard of duty, refers to this passage from Mr. Wesley as proof, in the following (very charitable) language:—

“Mr. Wesley did not intend, perhaps, to depress the standard of duty; but he held to the repeal of ‘the Adamic law,’ and thought it very consistent with perfection that persons should fall into great *errors* and *faults*.”\*

I regret exceedingly that the learned doctor should, either through prejudice or carelessness, have misrepresented Mr. Wesley in this case. The very important qualification which Mr. Wesley has inserted in a

\* Biblical Repository, vol. i, p. 56.



parenthesis could scarcely have escaped the doctor's notice ; and yet that qualification precludes the possibility of any such construction as he puts upon Mr. W.'s language, on any fair or honourable principles. The qualification is this : "I mean it [that is, the Adamic law] is not the condition either of present or future salvation." Now, does the doctor consider it the same thing to say that "the Adamic law *is not the condition* either of present or future salvation," as to say that that law is *repealed* ? If so, it will be but logically fair to conclude that, as he does not hold to "the repeal of the Adamic law," he must consider it as "the condition of present or future salvation." This is elevating "the standard of duty" with a vengeance ! It is holding to salvation upon the conditions of the covenant of works, contrary to all his own standards. But not insisting further upon this conclusion, I will now attempt to make good the position with which I commenced, namely, that there is little or no difference between the Wesleyan theory and its opposite, in relation to the sense in which the Adamic law is superseded by the law of faith. Luther, with all his strong views of the necessary continuance of indwelling sin through life, is as decisive upon the *destruction* of the law, as a condition of acceptance, as is Wesley himself. The great German reformer says : "*But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster* :—That is to say, we are free from the law, from the prison, and from our schoolmaster ; for when faith is revealed, the law terrifieth and tormenteth us no more. Paul here speaketh of faith as it was preached and published to the world by Christ in the time before appointed. For Christ, taking upon him our flesh, came once into the world : he abolished the law with all its effects, and delivered from eternal death all those who received

his benefit by faith. If, therefore, ye look unto Christ, and that which he hath done, there is now no law. For he, coming in the time appointed, took away the law. Now, since the law is gone, we are not yet under the tyranny thereof any more ; but we live in joy and safety under Christ, who now sweetly reigneth in us by his Spirit.”\*

Melancthon is equally decisive. “It is difficult,” says he, “to understand how we are free from the *law*. For it is inscribed on the minds of men ; so that to abolish the *law* would be the same as to destroy the mind and the creature of God. Therefore the *law* is not abrogated in such a sense that it should not be kept, but something else is proposed for justification, viz., the promise of reconciliation for the sake of Christ. Therefore the *law* is not removed, but the requirement of justification through the *law*, and the right of condemning men, (for no one has fulfilled it except Christ.) And that right of the law is taken away in respect to those only who by faith apprehend the justification promised through Christ. The law, therefore, is abrogated in respect to those who by faith have overcome the law, accusing, terrifying, and condemning them. This the apostle means when he says, ‘Ye are not under the law ;’ that is, though you do not satisfy the law, yet consider that you are reputed righteous on account of Christ, not on account of your own fulfilment of the law, your own love, or works. And as faith brings the Holy Spirit, and a new life, it brings also wisdom, and a new righteousness, viz., love to God, and other emotions assenting to the law of God. For faith through Christ draws near to God. Therefore we are not liberated from the *law* in such a sense that it should not be kept, for it is necessary that

\* Commentary on Galatians, chap. iii, 25.

it should be kept. And for this reason the Holy Spirit is given, that Christ may be glorified, and sin having been destroyed, the law might be truly accomplished in us. And hence the reason is manifest, why it is necessary that the *law* should be kept, while the ceremonies and judicial usages are entirely laid aside. It is because the *law* has reference to the emotions of the heart, which the Holy Spirit necessarily controls, (*affert secum.*) Therefore that part of the law stands in spiritual and eternal justice. But the other parts having reference to external rites, as they do not embrace eternal things, but things connected with time and place, do not remain.”\*

I next present an abstract of the views of Calvin upon this point. In his chapter entitled “The harmony between the promises of the law and those of the gospel,” after some preliminaries he proceeds:—“The consequence then is, that all mankind are proved by the law to be obnoxious to the curse and wrath of God; in order to be saved from which, they need deliverance from the power of the law, and emancipation from its servitude: not a carnal liberty, which would seduce us from obedience to the law, invite to all kinds of licentiousness, break down the barriers of inordinate desire, and give the reins to every lawless passion; but a spiritual liberty, which will console and elevate a distressed and dejected conscience, showing it to be delivered from the curse and condemnation under which it was held by the law. This liberation from subjection to the law, and manumission, (if I may use the term,) we attain, when we apprehend by faith the mercy of God in Christ, by which we are assured of the re-

\* Disputatio de discrimine Veteris et Novi Testamenti, deque Legis abrogatione.

mission of sins, by the sense of which the law penetrated us with legal compunction and remorse.

“For this reason all the promises of the law would be ineffectual and vain, unless we were assisted by the goodness of God in the gospel. For the condition of a perfect obedience to the law, on which they depend, and in consequence of which alone they are to be fulfilled, will never be performed. Now the Lord affords this assistance, not by leaving a part of righteousness in our works, and supplying part from his mercy, but by appointing Christ alone for the completion of righteousness. For the apostle having said that he and other Jews, ‘knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, believed in Christ,’ adds as a reason, not that they might be assisted to obtain a complete righteousness by faith in Christ, but ‘that they might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law,’ Gal. ii, 16. If the faithful pass from the law to faith, to find righteousness in the latter, which they perceive to be wanting in the former, they certainly renounce the righteousness of the law. Therefore, let whosoever will, now amplify the rewards which are said to await the observer of the law; only let him remark, that our depravity prevents us from receiving any benefit from them, till we have obtained by faith another righteousness. Thus David, after having mentioned the reward which the Lord hath prepared for his servants, immediately proceeds to the acknowledgment of sins, by which it is annulled. In the nineteenth psalm, likewise, he magnificently celebrates the benefits of the law; but immediately exclaims, ‘Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults,’ Psal. xix, 12. This passage perfectly accords with that before referred to, where, after having said, ‘All the paths of the Lord are mercy

and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies,' he adds, 'For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great,' Psa. xxv, 10, 11. So we ought also to acknowledge, that the divine favour is offered to us in the law, if we could purchase it by our works; but that no merit of ours can ever obtain it.

"What then, it will be said, were those promises given to vanish away without producing any effect? I have already declared that this is not my opinion. I assert, indeed, that they have no efficacy with respect to us as long as they are referred to the merit of works; wherefore, considered in themselves, they are in some sense abolished. Thus that grand promise, 'Keep my statutes and judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them,' (Lev. xviii, 5,) the apostle maintains to be of no value to us, if we rest upon it, and that it will be no more beneficial to us than if it had never been given; because it is inapplicable to the holiest of God's servants, who are all far from fulfilling the law, and are encompassed with a multitude of transgressions. Rom. x, 5, &c. But when these are superseded by the evangelical promises, which proclaim the gratuitous remission of sins, the consequence is, that not only our persons, but also our works, are accepted by God; and not accepted only, but followed by those blessings which were due by the covenant to the observance of the law. I grant, therefore, that the works of the faithful are rewarded by those things which the Lord hath promised in his law to the followers of righteousness and holiness; but in this retribution it is always necessary to consider the cause, which conciliates such favour to those works. Now this we perceive to be threefold: The first is, that God, averting his eyes from the actions of his servants, which are invariably



more deserving of censure than of praise, receives and embraces them in Christ, and by the intervention of faith alone reconciles them to himself without the assistance of works. The second is, that in his paternal benignity and indulgence he overlooks the intrinsic worth of these works, and exalts them to such honour, that he esteems them of some degree of value. The third cause is, that he pardons these works as he receives them, not imputing the imperfection with which they are all so defiled, that they might otherwise be accounted rather sins than virtues. Hence it appears how great has been the delusion of the sophists, who thought that they had dexterously avoided all absurdities by saying that **works** are sufficient to merit salvation, not on account of their own intrinsic goodness, but by reason of the covenant, because the Lord in his mercy hath estimated them so highly. But at the same time they had not observed, how far the works, which they styled *meritorious*, fell short of the condition of the promise; unless they were preceded by justification founded on faith alone, and by remission of sins, by which even good works require to be purified from blemishes. Therefore, of the three causes of the divine **goodness**, in consequence of which the works of the faithful are accepted, they only noticed one, and suppressed two others, and those the principal."

"After the Lord hath recovered a man from the abyss of perdition, and separated him **to** himself by the grace of adoption; because he hath regenerated him and raised him to a new life, he now receives and embraces him, as a new creature, with the gifts of his Spirit. This is the acceptance mentioned by Peter, in which even the works of the faithful after their vocation are approved by God; for the Lord cannot but

love and accept those good effects which are produced in them by his Spirit. But it must always be remembered, that they are accepted by God in consequence of their works, only because, for their sakes, and the favour which he bears to them, he deigns to accept whatever goodness he hath liberally communicated to their works. For whence proceeds the goodness of their works, but from the Lord's determination to adorn with true purity those whom he hath chosen as vessels of honour? And how is it that they are accounted good, as though they were free from all imperfection, except from the mercy of their Father, who pardons the blemishes which adhere to them? In a word, Peter intends nothing else in this passage, but that God accepts and loves his children, in whom he beholds the marks and lineaments of his own countenance; for we have elsewhere shown that regeneration is a reparation of the divine image in us. Wherever the Lord contemplates his own likeness, he justly both loves and honours it. The life of his children, therefore, being devoted to holiness and righteousness, is truly represented as pleasing to him. But as the faithful, while they are surrounded with mortal flesh, are still sinners, and all their works are imperfect, and tainted with the vices of the flesh, he cannot be propitious either to their persons or to their works, without regarding them in Christ rather than in themselves. It is in this sense that those passages must be understood which declare God to be merciful and compassionate to the followers of righteousness.”\*

The learned Witsius, as in his theological opinions generally, so upon this point, harmonizes with Calvin. His views are expressed as follows:—“Having sufficiently considered the violation of the covenant by sin,

\* Institutes, pp. 356, 357, 4to. New-York, 1819.

let us now inquire whether, and how far, it is made void or abrogated *by God himself*. And first, we are very certain that there are many things of immutable and eternal truth in this covenant; which we reckon up in this order. 1st. The precepts of the covenant, excepting that probatory one, oblige all and every one to a perfect performance of duty, in what state soever they are. 2dly. Eternal life, promised by the covenant, can be obtained upon no other condition than that of perfect, and in every respect complete, obedience. 3dly. No act of disobedience escapes the vengeance of God, and death is always the punishment of sin. But these maxims do not exclude a surety, who may come under engagements in man's stead, to undergo the penalty and perform the condition. But we shall speak of this afterward, and now proceed to what has been proposed."

"The law therefore remains as the rule of our duty, but abrogated as to its federal nature; nor can it be the condition, by the performance of which man may acquire a right to the reward. In this sense the apostle says, 'We are not under the law,' Rom. vi, 14; namely, as prescribing the condition of life. There is, indeed, still an indissoluble connection between perfect righteousness and eternal life, so that *the last* cannot be obtained without *the first*. But after that man, by falling from righteousness, had lost all his hope of the reward, God was at liberty either to punish the sinner, according to his demerit, or give him a surety to fulfil all righteousness in his stead."\*

Next, I present the confession of faith of the Westminster divines, adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.

\* Economy of the Covenants, book i, chap. ix, sec. 1, 2, and 21, vol. i, pp. 124, 132.

“Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned;<sup>a</sup> yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly;<sup>b</sup> discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives;<sup>c</sup> so as, exa-

*a* “Rom. vi, 14: For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Gal. ii, 16: Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ; that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Gal. iii, 13: Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. Gal. iv, 4, 5: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Acts xiii, 39: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from the which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Rom. viii, 1: There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

*b* “Rom. vii, 12: Wherefore the law is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Ver. 22: For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. Ver. 25: I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. Psa. cxix, 4: Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. Ver. 5: O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Ver. 6: Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. 1 Cor. vii, 19: Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. Gal. v, 14, 16, 18-23. See in the Bible.”

*c* “Rom. vii, 7: What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. Rom. iii, 20: Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

mining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin;<sup>d</sup> together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of his obedience.<sup>e</sup> It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin;<sup>f</sup> and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law.<sup>g</sup> The promises of it, in like manner, show them

*d* “James i, 23: For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. Ver. 24: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. Ver. 25: But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. Rom. vii, 9: For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Ver. 14: For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. Ver. 24: O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

*e* “Gal. iii, 24: Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Rom. vii, 24. (See before, in the letter *d*; ver. 25, in letter *b*.) Rom. viii, 3, 4: For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

*f* “James ii, 11: For he that said, Do not commit adultery; said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. Psal. cxix, 101: I have refrained my feet from every evil way: that I might keep thy word. Ver. 104: Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Ver. 128: Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.”

*g* “Ezra ix, 13, 14: And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; should we again break thy command-



God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof,<sup>h</sup> although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works :<sup>i</sup> so as a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one, and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law, and not under grace.<sup>k</sup>

ments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldst not thou be angry with us, till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? *Psa. lxxxix, 30-34*: If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments: then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."

*h* "(*Lev. xxvi, to the 14th verse.*) With *2 Cor. vi, 16*: And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. *Eph. vi, 2, 3*: Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise,) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. *Psalm xxxvii, 11*: But the meek shall inherit the earth: and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. With *Matt. v, 5*: Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. *Psa. xix, 11*: Moreover, by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

*i* "*Gal. ii, 16*: Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. *Luke xvii, 10*: So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

*k* "*Rom. vi, 12*: Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. *Ver. 14*: For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. *1 Pet. iii, 8-12*: Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous;

“Neither are the fore-mentioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the gospel, but do sweetly comply with it; <sup>l</sup> the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully which the will of God, revealed in the law, requireth to be done.”<sup>m</sup>

The learned Archbishop Usher, who in his theological views sympathized with the Westminster divines, has given us the following clear exhibition of

not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. With *Psa. xxxiv, 12-16*: What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good: seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. *Heb. xii, 28*: Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. *Ver. 29*: For our God is a consuming fire.”

*l* “*Gal. iii, 21*: Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.”

*m* “*Ezek. xxxvi, 27*: And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. *Heb. viii, 10*: For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. With *Jer. xxxi, 33*: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

the two covenants. The covenant of works he presents as follows :—

“ Declare now out of that which hath been said, what the covenant of works is.—It is a conditional covenant between God and man, whereby on the one side God commandeth the perfection of godliness and righteousness, and promiseth that he will be our God, if we keep all his commandments; and on the other side, man bindeth himself to perform entire and perfect obedience to God’s law, by that strength wherewith God hath endued him by the nature of his first creation.

“ What was done in this covenant on God’s part?—There was his law, backed with promises and threatenings; and unto them were added outward seals.

“ What was the sum of this law?—Do this, and thou shalt live: if thou dost it not, thou shalt die the death.

“ What is meant by, Do this?—Keep all my commandments, in thought, word, and deed.

“ What is meant by life, promised to those that should keep all the commandments?—The reward of blessedness and everlasting life. *Levit. xviii, 5; Luke x, 28.*

“ What is meant by death threatened to those that should transgress?—In this world the curse of God, and death, with manifold miseries both of body and soul: and (where this curse is not taken away) everlasting death both of body and soul in the world to come. *Deut. xxvii, 26; xxix, 19, 20; and xxxii, 22. Levit. xxvi; Deut. xxviii.*”\*

The covenant of grace he thus represents :—

“ What then is the sum of the covenant of grace?—That God will be our God, and give us life everlasting in Christ, if we receive him, being freely by his Father

\* *Body of Divinity*, pp. 110, 111.

offered unto us. Jer. xxi, 33; Acts xvi, 30, 31; John i, 12.

“How doth this covenant differ from that of works?—Much every way. For first, in many points the law may be conceived by reason: but the gospel in all points is far above the reach of man’s reason. Secondly. The law commandeth to do good, and giveth no strength: but the gospel enableth us to do good, the Holy Ghost writing the law in our hearts, (Jer. xxxi, 33,) and assuring us of the promise that revealeth this gift. Thirdly. The law promised *life* only; the gospel *righteousness* also. Fourthly. The law required perfect obedience, the gospel the righteousness of faith. Rom. iii, 31. Fifthly. The law revealeth sin, rebuketh us for it, and leaveth us in it: but the gospel doth reveal unto us the remission of sins, and freeth us from the punishment belonging thereunto. Sixthly. The law is the ministry of wrath, condemnation, and death: the gospel is the ministry of grace, justification, and life. Seventhly. The law was grounded on man’s own righteousness; requiring of every man in his *own person* perfect obedience, (Deut. xxvii, 26,) and in default, for satisfaction, everlasting punishment; (Ezek. xviii, 21, 22; Gal. iii, 10, 12;) but the gospel is grounded on the righteousness of Christ; admitting payment and performance by *another*, in behalf of so many as receive it. Gal. iii, 13, 14. And thus this covenant abolisheth not, but is the accomplishment and establishment of the former. Rom. iii, 31, and x, 4.

“Wherein do they agree?—They agree in this, that they be both of God, and declare one kind of righteousness, though they differ in offering it unto us.

“What is that one kind of righteousness?—It is the perfect love of God and of our neighbour.

“What thing doth follow upon this?—That the se-

vere law pronounceth all the faithful righteous: forasmuch as they have in Christ all that the law doth ask.

“But yet they remain transgressors of the law.—They are transgressors in themselves, and yet righteous in Christ; and in their inward man they love righteousness, and hate sin.

“What are we to consider in the covenant of grace? —The condition, first of the *Mediator*; and then of the rest of *mankind*. In the former consisteth the *foundation* of this covenant; the performance whereof dependeth upon Christ Jesus; (Acts x, 43; Rom. i, 3, 4;) to the latter belongeth the application thereof for salvation unto all that will receive it. 2 Cor. v, 20; Matt. vi, 33.”\*

Now where is the great ground of quarrel between Mr. Wesley and his opponents, touching the law? On both sides, all agree that we are not, in the gospel, put upon the terms of perfect conformity to the Adamic law, as the condition of salvation. That “true believers are not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned,” but that, as St. Paul says, “A man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law.” All admit that the law of perfect purity still remains, as an expression of the inflexible holiness of God, and as the great rule of duty binding all moral beings to a state of allegiance to their rightful Sovereign. That its use is to expose the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and “the terrible vengeance which awaits the sinner;” but that it makes no provision for either pardon or sanctification. While the law brandishes over the sinner’s head the sword of justice, the gospel offers him salvation upon terms which do not infract its high and holy claims. St. Paul says, “Christ is

\* Body of Divinity, pp. 140, 141.



the end (*τελος, perfection, completeness\**) of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. x, 4; that is, the great purposes of the law are fully carried out and sustained by extending righteousness,—the grace of justification and sanctification, to the believer.

Again St. Paul says, "The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith: but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."† Gal. iii, 24, 25.

Mr. Wesley, then, is sustained, in his strongest expressions, by Luther, Calvin, the Westminster divines, and, I might add, by all the orthodox reformers, both Calvinists and Arminians; and, what is infinitely better, by the great apostle of the Gentiles, upon the subject of the abolishment of the law, *as a condition of life*.

\* "*For Christ is the end of the law*—Completement, or, as translated by Erasmus, perfection of the law is tolerably well suited to this passage; yet, since the common reading is almost universally received, and does not ill agree with the context, I leave it to my readers to make their own choice. Every precept, every promise, every doctrine of the law looks to Christ as the mark which ought to be kept constantly in view. All the judicial, ceremonial, ritual, and moral parts of the law are directed to the Messiah as their completion."—*Calvin. See his Commentary on the place.*

† "*Schoolmaster*—That is to say, a means and instrument to govern our souls and actions, fitting for the church's childhood, with much rigour and servitude. *That we might*—Namely, that looking still upon Christ, the church might, even in those days, receive from him the gift of righteousness and life, and that at this present time the effect of free justification might show itself at full, by freeing us from the former labours and rigours of the law. *No longer under*—He means not here that the doctrine is abolished, but only the properties and qualities of it, whereby it appointeth reward and punishment with the uttermost rigour; forgiveth nothing, but requireth entire obedience, &c." *Diadati—Pious Annotations upon the Holy Bible.* Quarto. London. 1648.

When we plead for a state of holiness which fully meets the *requirements of the gospel*, why must our opponents for ever meet us with the objection that the law is infinitely above the highest measure of our obedience? And when we reply, "We are not under the law, but under grace," just as St. Paul and all their own divines teach, why are we then to be charged with lowering the standard of holiness required by God's holy law? Is this legitimate reasoning? I think not. I am persuaded the objection is founded in a mistaken issue, and that the reasoning which follows is consequently all fallacious.

But, after all, it may be urged that there is no real difference between the original law and the law of love—that the requirement that we should love God with all our heart, soul, and strength, is equal to the original law of perfect purity.

The difference between the original law of perfect purity and the law of love, as incorporated in the gospel, is this: One is an expression of the divine will concerning beings perfectly pure, in the full possession of all their original capabilities; but the other is an expression of the divine will concerning fallen beings restored to a state of probation by the mediation of Christ. Each alike requires the exercise of *all the capabilities* of the subjects; but the subjects being in different circumstances, and differing in the amount of their capabilities, the standard of obedience is, from the necessity of the case, varied. Allowing the same formulary to be employed in both cases, viz., "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," the heart, &c., in one case, being in a different condition from what it is in the other, does not *in all respects* imply the same thing. In both cases it implies *the*

*whole heart*:—but *the whole heart* is less in some respects in one case than in the other.

This, it may still be urged, amounts to the same thing, viz., a dishonouring of the law. For in this case the standard of duty and of character is lower than the law originally required, and just so far the law is not fulfilled—is not magnified and made honourable.

It is admitted that the claims of the law cannot be said to have been met, *in his own person*, by the holiest man that has ever lived since the fall. And had this been required as the condition of salvation, who could have been saved? But then, if the claims of the law are not met in us—if we are not by some means raised up to the standard of holiness which the law requires—is the law not dishonoured in every instance in which a sinner is saved from its curse? Such would doubtless be the fact, were it not for the atonement of Christ. But Christ by his atonement has, so to speak, made amends to the law for the injury it receives by the pardon of offenders. “Christ is the end [or perfection] of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,” Rom. x, 4.

We see the law, for the purpose of maintaining the moral order of God’s kingdom, inflicting death upon transgression. Now, unless God’s abhorrence of sin and the holiness of his government can be manifested to intelligent and moral beings as clearly and as fully by some other means, every individual sinner must infallibly die—there can be no hope of salvation but upon the *destruction* of the law. The death of Christ is represented in the Scriptures as meeting the case. It supervenes to rescue the law from disgrace—so to carry out its original objects, viz., a demonstration of God’s righteousness, and an exhibition of the evil of sin, that its highest honour is secured in the pardon

and salvation of the believer. As saith the apostle: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus," Rom. iii, 25, 26.

Rom. viii, 3, 4, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," is sometimes erroneously quoted to prove that Christians may practically fulfil "the righteousness of the law." But I conceive the apostle's object is to show the effect of "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" upon "the righteousness of the law," in the case of those "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The apostle shows in whom and how the righteousness of the law is fulfilled. This is done in those "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." It is done by "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemning sin in the flesh." The fulfilment of the righteousness of the law is thus attributed to Christ—to his sacrificial death upon the cross, by which he "condemned sin in the flesh," or, in other words, made a suitable and necessary expression of God's abhorrence of sin. But to return to the main point.

The standard of character set up in the gospel must be such as is practicable by man, fallen as he is. Coming up to this standard is what we call Christian perfection. But the opposers of this doctrine vehemently object to the idea of admitting any thing short

of perfect and unsinning obedience, according to the claims of the original law. No allowance must be made for our infirmities. *Circumstances* must not be taken into the account in fixing the standard of duty. And the opposite view is represented as running into the grossest absurdities. It is thought that the idea of the divine requirements being graded according to the *circumstances* of the agent necessarily implies "that the more we sin and thereby debilitate our powers, the more circumscribed does the sphere of our duty become—or, in other words, that we are excusable for not meeting the requisitions of the law of God just in proportion as we advance in the career of rebellion against him. And if there is either truth or safety in this position, then the shortest road to entire sanctification is the highway of sin. We have only to persevere in sin until our powers become so 'weak' that we have no further capability of obeying any part of the divine law, and then we are sanctified to the full extent of our obligations; because our 'circumstances' are such that we are under no obligation whatever."\*

This is an ingeniously woven web of sophistry. Let us test it:—1. It must be conceded that sin is attended with a loss of moral power. And 2. Until the sinner shall have exhausted the last moment of his probation, his salvation is possible. Consequently, 3. He is only required on his part to do, at any given point in his downward course, what at that point he is able to do by the help which is offered him. For if, at any point of time, his powers fall short of the requirement, and so his salvation is no longer practicable, then his probation ceases, and the promises of the gospel are no longer applicable to him. But, 4. His responsibility

\* Dr. Snodgrass on Entire Sanctification, pp. 23, 24.



in general does not diminish, but rather increases, with his loss of power. Until he repents, his guilt constantly accumulates, and one of its great aggravations is, that he is squandering away the precious talent committed to him—that he is with every sin weakening the power of conscience and grieving the Spirit of God, and so disqualifying himself for the great ends of his being, and constantly approaching a reprobacy of mind which is a certain precursor of eternal death.

5. At any point in the sinner's life before his probation expires, on the conditions of repentance and faith, God will graciously pardon *all his sins*—not excepting their aggravations—his squandering away his moral power, or, in other words, his voluntary and unnecessary abuse, and consequent loss, of the grace bestowed upon him for his salvation. All—all this is forgiven freely. Well, when all these sins are graciously pardoned, can it be supposed that he is now held accountable for the improvement of powers and privileges which, in his former course of evil living, he had wholly squandered away, and cannot now recover? An old inebriate comes to repentance. Does God require of him now, with his broken constitution and enfeebled mental energies, just as much as would have been required if he had begun to serve him in the days of his youth, and had constantly accumulated moral power to hoary age? I mean, is he required, after having received pardon at the hand of God for all past sins, as a condition of continued gracious acceptance, to employ in the service of God undiminished and uninjured powers of body and mind? If so, he is put upon terms altogether impracticable. Indeed, upon this principle no one can ever be saved; for no one can do as much as he could have done if he had never sinned.

Should it here be objected, that upon the principle that God will accept of what our enfeebled powers enable us to bestow, at any time, we have great encouragement to continue in sin, for the more we sin the less is required of us; we should answer, 1. A man's salvation is not probable in proportion to the smallness of his powers. The man who had five talents improved them, while the man who had but one hid it in the earth. 2. Sin constantly accumulates guilt, and increases the difficulty of repentance, and, of course, the doubtfulness of that repentance. 3. If the sinner comes to repentance, one of the bitterest ingredients in his cup of sorrow will be, that he has lost so much power to do good and glorify God, and that at best he must stumble along at a poor rate, with broken bones and diminished comforts. And 4. If he finally gets to heaven, he will then see that he has failed to secure an inconceivable amount of blessedness, by neglecting to make the best of his means. What encouragement is there here, then, to continue in sin? I confess I see none.

To make Dr. Snodgrass's conclusion, that "the shortest road to entire sanctification is the highway of sin," valid, he must assume that the sinner, when he shall have persevered in sin until his powers become so weak that he has no further capability of obeying any part of the divine law, is then, of course, to be pardoned for all his numerous and aggravated offences, and sanctified from his accumulated and crimson stains, *without repentance and faith*. And this he must find contained in our system, or he has no right to assume it. But the principle we deny and utterly detest; nor can it, by any process of legitimate reasoning, be shown to grow out of our theory, or to hold to it the least relationship.

I have been the more diffuse upon this point, because it is much relied upon by the opposition; and because it has seldom been fully and perspicuously treated. I know not whether I have added any light to what others have shed upon it. I have, however, attempted to make the whole subject as clear as the nature of the case will admit, and have reached results which are, at least, satisfactory to my own mind. That they will be equally so to others is more than I can expect. With such I will unite in humble and earnest prayer to God, "What I know not, teach thou me," until the obscurity of our spiritual vision shall be wholly removed.

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## LECTURE XII.

### OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE DOCTRINE—CONTINUED.

"How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"—Rom. vi, 2.

IN the two preceding lectures I considered various objections which are urged against the doctrine of the attainableness of entire sanctification in this life. The more weighty objections, however, yet remain to be examined. They are those which are founded upon certain portions of Scripture which are supposed to be directly opposed to this doctrine. It shall be the object of this lecture carefully and candidly to inquire into the true sense of such passages, and to see whether, when properly understood, they in any measure militate against our views.

I have for the Bible a most sincere and unreserved veneration, and to its decisions I would bow with un-

qualified submission. I believe it to be God's own word—all inspired—and consequently, to speak the truth without mixture of error, and to be entirely consistent with itself. If, then, our opponents are able to bring "the direct testimony of the Bible" against our views upon the subject in question, and if, upon due investigation, it shall appear that they have treated their witness fairly:—if there is no reason to question their construction of the language they adduce, why, then, we are in error, and must recede from our ground. Now let us see what is produced under this head.

We are told, that "not a single text can be adduced, which, properly understood, attributes perfection to good men in this life. On the contrary, the criminal imperfection of them all is most plainly asserted."\* If this proposition can be maintained, we are certainly wide of the mark of evangelical truth.

The first scripture adduced by the reviewer to prove the latter part of the above assertion is Eccles. vii, 20, "For there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." Another passage, similar in language, which is presented, is 1 Kings viii, 46, "For there is no man that sinneth not." These passages are found in the article referred to, as usual, without illustration, criticism, or argument. They are supposed to be entirely conclusive. Hence it is simply remarked in relation to the first, that "it is as evident from this passage that no one on earth is perfectly holy as that any are imperfect."† This conclusion I do not admit, and for the reasons which follow.

In my construction of these passages I appeal to the original. This I do not do because I have not a high respect for the present authorized version of the Bible. I believe it in general to be worthy of all confidence,

\* Princeton Review, July, 1842, p. 451.

† Ibid.

and, on the whole, a better exhibition of the sense of the originals than any translation which has been subsequently made, or than any we are likely very soon to have. But in discussing the language of Scripture, in all cases of a difference of opinion the ultimate appeal must be to the originals. And our opponents, it may be presumed, will not object to this method of discussion, even should it be found that the *sound* of the words, as in the present version, is rather more favourable to their views than the *sense* of the original text. I can scarcely be left to fear that critics so learned for such a reason will refuse to be governed by well-established laws of exigeses.

1 Kings viii, 46, כִּי אֵין אָדָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִחַטֵּא I render, *for there is no man who may not sin*. And Eccles. vii, 20, כִּי אֲדָם אֵין צַדִּיק בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה־טוֹב וְלֹא יִחַטֵּא, *There is not a righteous man upon earth who does good and may not sin*. The verb יִחַטֵּא *to sin* in these passages is in the future, and I render it subjunctively; with the negative particle, *may not sin*, that is, there is no man *who is not liable to sin*. The rule of Hebrew syntax authorizing this rendering may be found in all good Hebrew Grammars. I give it from Dr. Nordheimer, as follows:—"The future form of the verb is frequently used to predicate the future occurrence of an event as dependant either *subjectively* on the will of the agent or speaker, or *objectively* on external circumstances.

"This form is used subjunctively, to denote contingency, that is, to predicate not the positive but the possible or probable future occurrence of an event, signified in English by the auxiliaries *may, might, &c.*, e. g., כֹּל אֲשֶׁר תִּאֲדָה נַפְשְׁךָ *whatever thy soul may desire*, Deut. xiv, 26; וְיִרְחֹנֵנוּ מִדֶּרֶכֵּינוּ *that he may instruct us concern-*



*ing his ways*, Isa. ii, 3 ; וְלֹא יִשְׁחַת לָכֶם אֶת־פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה *that he may not destroy for you the produce of the ground*, Mal. iii, 11 ; וְיָדְעוּ גוֹיִם אֲנֹשׁ הֵמָּה *that the nations may know they (are) men*, Psal. ix, 21 ; cxix, 115 ; וְיֵעֶבֶר עָלַי מָה *whatever may happen to me*, Job xiii, 13 ; xiv, 6.”\*

In the application of the rule just recited to the passages under consideration, we are supported by some of the best critics, Romish, Lutheran, Calvinist, and Arminian. The Vulgate, or Jerome’s version, has *non peccet, may not sin*. In the interlineal translations in the Antwerp, London, and Paris Polyglotts ; in Castalio’s, Osiander’s, and Francis Junius’ versions, we have the same. And we have precisely the same rendering of the Syriac and Arabic in the London and Paris Polyglotts. This result I have arrived at from personal inspection of the authorities I quote, and I need not say to a scholar, that they present a tide of evidence in favour of the version I have given, that it is not easy for the sturdiest spirits to resist. We see here what the best scholars of any age since the commencement of the Christian era have determined in relation to the proper rendering of the original Hebrew text, without any reference at all to the question at issue between us and our opponents on the subject of the necessary continuance of sin in believers.

In addition to all this, there is a reason in the context of one of the passages in question, which makes our rendering necessary to preserve a consistent sense. (1 Kings viii, 46.) The words in question are preceded by “*if they sin*,” which would be perfectly consistent with the parenthetic sentence which follows, as we

\* See Critical Grammar of the Hebrew Language, vol. ii, *Dependent use of the Future*, § 993. See also Stuart’s Hebrew Grammar § 564, (h,) (i.)

translate it: "for there is no man who *may* not sin, but would be scarcely at all consistent with the expression of the sense our opponents give the passage. They would have Solomon say, *If they sin, for they certainly will sin, as there is no man who does not sin ALL HIS LIFE.* What sense would there be in the hypothetical sentence "*if they sin,*" if indeed there had been no *IF* in the case?

I have devoted so much attention to these passages because they are confidently relied upon, and on all occasions brought forward by our opponents, both learned and unlearned, as altogether conclusive—as decisively proving, that *the best men continue to sin on through every step of their way to heaven!* I will now close with Dr. Clarke's notes upon the passages.

Upon 1 Kings viii, 46, he says:—"On this verse we may observe that the second clause, as it is here translated, renders the *supposition* in the first clause entirely nugatory; for if there be *no man that sinneth not*, it is useless to say, *if they sin*; but this contradiction is taken away by reference to the original, *כִּי יַחֲטֹא לָךְ* *ki yechetu lach*, which should be translated *if they shall sin against thee, or should they sin against thee*; *כִּי אֵין אָדָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יַחֲטֵא* *ki ein Adam asher lo yecheta*, for there is no man that *MAY* not sin; that is, there is no man *impeccable*, none *infallible*, none that is not *liable* to transgress. This is the true meaning of the phrase in various parts of the Bible, and so our translators have understood the original: for even in the thirty-first verse of this chapter they have translated *יַחֲטֵא* *yecheta*, *if a man TRESPASS*; which certainly implies he *might* or *might not* do it; and in this way they have translated the same word, *if a soul SIN*, in Lev. v, 1; vi, 2; 1 Sam. ii, 25; 2 Chron. vi, 22, and in several other places. The truth is, the Hebrew

has no mood to express words in the *permissive* or *optative* way, but to express this sense it uses the *future* tense of the conjugation *kal*.

“This text has been a wonderful strong hold for all who believe that there is no redemption from sin in this life; that no man can live without committing sin, and that we cannot be entirely freed from it till we die. 1. The text speaks no such doctrine: it only speaks of the *possibility* of every man sinning, and this must be true of a state of *probation*. 2. There is not another text in the divine records that is more to the purpose than this. 3. The doctrine is flatly in opposition to the design of the gospel; for Jesus came to save his people from their sins, and to destroy the works of the devil. 4. It is a dangerous and destructive doctrine, and should be blotted out of every Christian’s creed. There are too many who are seeking to excuse their crimes by all means in their power; and we need not embody their excuses in a creed, to complete their deception, by stating that their sins are *unavoidable*.”

Upon Eccles. vii, 20, “לא יחטא *lo yechta*, that *may not sin*. There is not a man upon earth, however just he may be, and habituated to do good, but is *peccable*—liable to commit sin; and therefore should continually watch and pray, and depend upon the Lord. But the text does not say, the *just man does commit sin*, but simply that he *may sin*; and so our translators have rendered it in 1 Sam. ii, 25, twice in 1 Kings viii, 31, 46, and 2 Chron. vi, 36.”

Another passage which, it is supposed, is directly against us, is, James iii, 2, “In many things we offend all.” Mr. Wesley’s reply to the argument deduced from this text is short, but conclusive. It is as follows:—

“True; but who are the persons here spoken of?

Why, those many masters or teachers whom God had not sent ; not the apostle himself, nor any real Christian. That in the word *we*, used by a figure of speech, common in all other as well as the inspired writings, the apostle could not possibly include himself, or any other true believer, appears, First, from the ninth verse, ‘Therewith bless we God, and therewith curse we men.’ Surely not we apostles ! not we believers ! Secondly, from the words preceding the text : ‘My brethren, be not many masters,’ or teachers, ‘knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all.’ *We ! Who ?* Not the apostles, nor true believers, but they who were to ‘receive the greater condemnation,’ because of those many offences. Nay, Thirdly, the verse itself proves that ‘we offend all,’ cannot be spoken either of all men or all Christians. For in it immediately follows the mention of a man who ‘offends not,’ as the *we* first mentioned did ; from whom therefore he is professedly contradistinguished, and pronounced a ‘perfect man.’”\*

And another is 1 John i, 8, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” The same clear and conclusive reasoner meets the argument from this passage with equal promptness, thus :—

“I answer, (1.) The tenth verse fixes the sense of the eighth : ‘If we say we have no sin,’ in the former, being explained by, ‘If we say we have not sinned,’ in the latter verse. (2.) The point under consideration is not, whether we have or have not sinned heretofore ; and neither of these verses asserts that we do sin, or commit sin now. (3.) The ninth verse explains both the eighth and tenth : ‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse

\* Plain Account, pp. 24, 25.

us from all unrighteousness.' As if he had said, 'I have before affirmed the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.' And no man can say, 'I need it not; I have no sin to be cleansed from.' 'If we say we have no sin,' that 'we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves,' and make God a liar: but 'if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just,' not only 'to forgive us our sins,' but also 'to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,' that we may 'go and sin no more.'\*\*

The last argument from the Scriptures in favour of the necessary continuance of sin in believers which I shall notice, is that founded upon the *seventh* chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Here, it is alleged, the apostle speaks of his own present experience, and acknowledges the existence of corruptions—of the carnal mind—in himself. And it is urged that if the great apostle of the Gentiles was obliged to confess himself "*carnal, sold under sin*," it can hardly be expected that any this side of heaven may be entirely freed from sin.

There are two views taken of the chapter in question. One is, that the apostle is speaking of his own state at the time of writing, and, of course, the same may be said of the best of Christians. The other is, that he is speaking of his former experience, when groaning under the bondage of the law, or that he personates one in that condition.

I shall first consider the reasons which are assigned for the former view, and then attempt to prove the truth of the latter.

As I find the arguments in favour of that exposition I oppose stated in the strongest light in the commentaries of Professor Hodge and the Rev. Albert Barnes, I shall state them in the language of these authors.

\* Plain Account, pp. 25, 26.



Professor Hodge says:—"That Paul throughout the latter part of this chapter is describing his own feelings when writing, appears evident from the following considerations.

"a. Because he uses the first person and the present tense throughout the passage, and says, 'I consent to the law that it is good;' 'I delight in the law of God;' 'I see another law in my members;' 'O wretched man that I am;' 'So then I myself serve the law of God,' &c., &c. He does this with an earnestness and warmth which show that he is expressing the feelings of his own heart. No example is to be found in all the apostle's writings analogous to this, if it be assumed that he is here personating another."\*

This reasoning is not conclusive: for if it be true that "no example is to be found in all the apostle's writings analogous to this—if it be assumed that he is here personating another"—still there may be reasons for considering this a solitary instance of the kind in the writings of St. Paul. It is not always possible, or ever necessary to find "examples" in all respects "analogous" in order to understand a passage from any writer. But "examples" sufficiently analogous for our purposes can be found "in the apostle's writings" which will be presented before the argument is closed. The commentator proceeds:—

"b. Because there is nothing in this passage inconsistent with the experience of the holiest of men. This has been shown in the commentary. The inward conflict here described every Christian understands and experiences."

Now in the "commentary" on the fourteenth verse the author says, "*Carnal*, when spoken of men, means

\* Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. Philadelphia. 1836. P. 176.

to be under the government of the flesh," and on the phrase, *sold under sin*, he says, "That is, a slave to sin." But still another meaning he gives the words, in order to make them apply to the Christian character, but which suits it little better. He says:—"The phrase in question, however, may also mean that one is subject to a power which, of himself, he cannot resist; against which he may and does struggle, and from which he desires to be free; but which, notwithstanding all his efforts, still asserts its authority. This is a state of bondage. It is in this sense that Paul says he was sold under sin. This appears clearly from the following verses, which are explanatory of this clause." Now is the true Christian in "a state of bondage?" The apostle declares that "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" had made him "free from the law of sin and death," chap. viii, 2. Is there no difference between being *free* and being in *bondage*? When the author will prove this, which, by-the-by, he has not yet done to my satisfaction in his commentary, then will he have gained his point, or rather I may say, he will have confounded things radically and essentially different, and have made the apostle totally unintelligible. Whether the language of this chapter does indeed accord "with the experience of the holiest of men," I shall more particularly inquire hereafter, simply remarking for the present, that this is wholly assumed by the author without proof. Again,—

"c. The passage contains many declarations inconsistent with the Scriptural account of unrenewed men. The Bible does not speak of unrenewed men as consenting to the law, as hating sin and struggling against it, groaning under it as a tyrant's yoke, as delighting in the law of God, and doing all this as to the inward or new man."

This argument depends upon the author's construction of verse 22, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." This he thinks "expressive of real complacency and delight in the divine excellence as exhibited in the law," and of course proof positive and conclusive that the apostle speaks of a person in a gracious state. But this argument is completely refuted by Professor Stuart, in his note upon this passage:—

"(22) *Συνήδομαι γὰρ . . . ἑνὶ ἄνθρωπον*, for *I delight in the law of God, as it respects the internal man. Γάρ illustrantis.* The sentiment is, for substance, the same as in ver. 15–17; but the costume in which it appears is diverse. That the sentiment, moreover, is epexegetical of ver. 21, is quite plain. Hence the γάρ with which it is introduced.

"In regard to the *words*; *συνήδομαι* here corresponds to *σύμφημι* in ver. 16; and *ἔσω ἑνὶ ἄνθρωπον* here, corresponds to *ἐγὼ* in ver. 17. If any one is disposed to urge here the strength of the expression *συνήδομαι τῷ νόμῳ*, as being inconsistent with an unregenerate state, he will do well to look back on ver. 14, and ask, whether the expression there, on the other side, is not still stronger. The truth is, in a contrast like this, where the mind of the writer is wrought up to a high pitch of feeling, the mere *forms* of expression cannot in themselves go very far toward establishing any principle of doctrine. It is *to the object at which the writer is aiming* that we must look; and this object has been already brought to view. But if any one insists on urging the *form* of expression, I must ask him first to construe ver. 14 by the rule which he himself here adopts; and then to compare Mark vi, 20; John v, 35; Matt. xiii, 20; John ii, 23–25; Acts viii, 13, comp. ver. 20–23; Isa. lviii, 2, where it is said of the wicked, that 'they delight to know my ways,' and 'they take

delight in approaching to God.' Comp. also 1 Kings xxi, 27-29; 1 John iii, 9; Psa. cxix, 3. Many other passages of the like tenor could be adduced, in order to show that a *qualified* sense is to be put on such expressions. Above all, John xv, 22-24; Matt. vi, 24; Luke xvi, 13, and xiv, 26, show that very strong expressions of this kind are to be modified according to the nature of the case which is under consideration.

"With such examples before us, and with the whole context (at least so it plainly appears to me) to remind us of the necessity of taking *συνήδομαι* in a *qualified* sense, I cannot hesitate to say, that ver. 22 only expresses in a more intense form, and with more feeling, what is simply expressed in ver. 16, *σύμφημι τῷ νόμῳ*. The approbation, complacency, (so to speak,) which reason and conscience yield to the divine law as holy and good, is the truth intended to be expressed. It is strongly expressed, indeed; but not more so than in the cases to which the reader is referred above, and about the exegesis of which there can be no disagreement. In fact, the very next verse shows, that the apostle cannot here be understood to mean the pleasure which a regenerate and filial spirit takes in the divine law; for this, as chap. viii, 1-17 most clearly shows, would lead the person who might possess it, to 'walk after the Spirit,' and not 'after the flesh;' while here, the very individual who 'delights in the law of God after the inner man,' is at the same time represented as being ruled over by the law of sin and death, and led to destruction by it. Is this the real state of a child of God? Comp. viii, 9-14."\*

Let us now attend to another of Professor Hodge's reasons:—

"d. Because the conflict which is here described is,

\* Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.

in other passages, portrayed (for example, in Gal. v, 17) in language which, by common consent, can be applied only to true Christians. That these passages refer to the same subject is plain, not only from the fact that the flesh (or corrupt nature) is mentioned in both as the evil principle, but because the description in both cases is nearly in the same words. There the flesh is said to war against the spirit, so that we cannot do the things that we would; here the flesh or the law in the members is said to war against the law in the mind, so as to bring us into captivity to the law of sin. If, therefore, the one passage is descriptive of the experience of the true Christian, so must also the other be."

The passage in Galatians upon which the professor relies is as follows:—"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would," Gal. v, 17. There is, however, an essential difference between this passage and the one he would illustrate by it. In the passage in Galatians there is a *conflict* between the *flesh* and the *Spirit*. But in the passage especially in question, (Rom. vii, 14,) the flesh is *dominant*. The subject of the seventh of Romans is represented as struggling indeed, but never victorious—as making resistance, but still a captive—a *slave* to sin. In the passage which he would make parallel, the flesh opposes and curtails the operations of the Spirit, so that they could not do the things they would. They were *weakened* by the flesh, but it is not said they were *conquered*. Here the author totally fails: and failing here, his argument is wholly inconclusive.\* But let us attend to his concluding reason:—

\* For a more complete view of the difference between these two passages, see Dr. Hammond on Romans vii, 23.



“e. The context requires this interpretation. The apostle has been insisting on the necessity of our being free from the law in order to our justification and sanctification. To show that his doctrine does not involve any reflection on the law, it was necessary to show why the law is thus inefficient. In order to accomplish this object, he explains how the law operates on the depraved heart. It arouses conscience, and it provokes opposition. This is one part of its effect, but not the whole. Even when the heart is renewed, the law cannot by itself promote holiness. It presents, indeed, the form of beauty, and the soul delights in it after the inward man, but it cannot destroy the power of indwelling sin. The Christian, therefore, must look for deliverance, not to the law, but to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It was essential, therefore, to the apostle’s object to show that, even for the true Christian, the bondage of the law is unnecessary.”

As to the object of the apostle the commentator is doubtless correct, but the conclusion from it is a *non sequitor*. I do not mean the conclusion expressed in the quotation, that “the Christian must look for deliverance, not to the law, but to the grace of God in Christ Jesus”—this conclusion is good and valid—but his general conclusion, that therefore the apostle is speaking of one in a regenerate state. Let us see how this conclusion follows from his premises.

“The apostle,” he truly says, “has been insisting on the necessity of our living free from the law, in order to our justification and sanctification.” To show this, without at the same time impugning the law, he shows the cause of the inefficiency of the law. “It arouses conscience,” &c. But “even when the heart is aroused, it cannot promote holiness.” The doctrine of this latter proposition is true enough, but it is wholly an assump-

tion without proof that this is the true position taken by the apostle. Had he said, even when the *heart* is *awakened*, or the *conscience aroused*, the law cannot deliver from the power of sin—*cannot sanctify*—he would have said all that either the language or the scope of the apostle's argument authorizes. A little examination will convince any one, that the commentator, in order to make his argument apply, assumes the main point in dispute, and that the point he assumes is not only unnecessary to give a consistent sense to the chapter under discussion, but involves the apostle in absurdities and contradictions, as we shall presently see. The grand object of the apostle in this chapter is to show that *the law cannot renew the heart*. Now, whence the necessity, even if it were a conceded fact, to assert the triumphs of sin in the best of Christians through life? This would be proving too much: for it would prove that the *gospel*, as well as the *law*, is ineffectual to the purposes of subduing the evils of the human heart. How would this result tell upon the apostle's ulterior design, which undoubtedly was to bring in the gospel in place of the law? Would he be likely to effect this object—that is, would he persuade the Jew to believe that the gospel is the more efficient system, by a laboured argument to prove that it is just as effectually baffled as is the law itself by the reigning power of human corruptions? This would be a singular course of argument indeed.

The Rev. Mr. Barnes gives us six reasons for understanding the seventh of Romans, “as descriptive of the operations of the mind of Paul subsequent to his conversion.” These are mostly the same as those of Professor Hodge, and have been already answered. The *first* and the *last*, however, may require special attention. The first is, “Because it seems to me to

be the most obvious. It is that which will strike plain men as being the natural meaning; men who have not a theory to support, and who understand language in its usual sense."

I cannot admit that any one capable of grasping the scope of the apostle's argument, as contained in the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters, would consider Mr. Barnes' construction of the seventh chapter "the most obvious." It might strike some "plain men as being the most natural;" but they will, I think, generally be those who, if they "have not a theory to support," yet approach the investigation under strong biases. The language of the Bible can scarcely mean anything else to most men than what they have always been accustomed to hear attributed to it by their teachers. It is hard work for Mr. Barnes himself to depart from the exegesis sanctioned by the puritan fathers upon certain proof texts, though he ventures to go wide of their doctrinal views upon several points, and sometimes at the hazard of the charge of inconsistency. His last reason for his exposition is as follows:—"Because it accords with the experience of Christians, and not with sinners. It is just such language as plain Christians, who are acquainted with their own hearts, use to express their feelings."

Here I am at issue with our commentator. I must, however, admit that some "plain Christians" use the language of the seventh chapter of Romans "to express their feelings." And I shall not attempt to decide whether "their feelings" are wrong, or the "language" they "use to express" them, is improperly applied. There may be many in the churches whose spiritual condition is accurately defined in the portion of Scripture under examination. And there may be many others who, from bad instruction, have always

been accustomed to use this language in relation to themselves, who have never particularly examined the question of the propriety of this application of it. The question, however, to be settled is, whether the language of Paul in the seventh of Romans is really descriptive of a regenerate state—of the feelings of St. Paul after his conversion. Now let us contrast one passage of this chapter with what our author says upon another portion of the epistle. Chap. vii, 14, “But I am carnal, sold under sin.” Upon chap. vi, 11, “Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin,” Mr. Barnes remarks:—“So that sin shall have no influence or control over you, any more than the objects of this world have over the dead in their graves.” And again, upon verse 2, “How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” he observes:—“It is impossible for those who are *dead* to act as if they were alive. To be *dead* to a thing is a strong expression, denoting that it has no influence over us. A man that is dead is uninfluenced and unaffected by the affairs of this life. When it is said, therefore, that a Christian is *dead to sin*, the sense is, that it has lost its influence over him; he is not subject to it; he is in regard to that, as the man in the grave is to the busy scenes and cares of this life.”

This, then, we may fairly conclude is the commentator's view of Christian experience—that it consists in being dead to sin, that is, delivered from it—“that it has lost its influence over him.” And yet upon chap. vii, 14, which he says “accords with the experience of Christians, and not with sinners,” he says, “Sold under sin, is borrowed from the practice of selling captives taken in war, as slaves. It here means to deliver to the power of any one, so that he shall be dependant on his will and control.” And he proceeds

to apply his illustration, and says: "He [Paul] was subject to it, [sin,] and under its control;" that "it had such an influence over him as to lead him to commit it," &c. Now let any one bring these two expositions together and see how they harmonize. The Christian is *dead to sin*, that is, "it has lost its influence over him; he is not subject to it; he is in regard to that, as the man in the grave is to the busy scenes and cares of this life." And yet St. Paul describes the same character when he says he is *sold under sin*, that is, according to our commentator, "he was subject to it, and under its control—it had such an influence over him as to lead him to commit it!!" Now had this author intended to contradict himself as directly as possible in these expositions, could he have done it more effectually? Professor Hodge involves himself in the same inconsistency, though his phraseology is a little more guarded. The principles of interpretation adopted by these gentlemen are radically wrong, and it is not marvellous that they conflict with themselves.

Now I affirm, on the contrary, that the language of the seventh chapter of Romans does not accord "with the experience of Christians;" and our learned commentators themselves, in other places, apply language to "the experience of Christians" utterly at war with this, they themselves being permitted in both instances to give their own construction of it. Into similar inconsistencies is every commentator drawn who takes the same view. He is compelled to give a sense to the language of St. Paul in the sixth and eighth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, which cannot be made to harmonize with what is found in the seventh chapter upon the hypothesis that he is speaking of the same character. Common propriety and common sense will necessarily forbid our confounding *bondage*.



and *liberty*—*abject slavery* and *perfect freedom*. No powers of criticism can ever reconcile them—no sophistry can make the effort even plausible.

I shall now proceed to assign reasons for the opposite view of the design of the apostle in the portion of his Epistle to the Romans now under consideration. I humbly conceive that the only consistent view of the seventh of Romans is, that it refers to a person under the law—convinced by the law of the evil of sin, but not yet delivered from its power by the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is the argument of the learned Dr. Whitby. On verse 25 he says :—

“*Αὐτὸς ἐγὼ, the same man*] Of whom he had before spoken, not I, Paul, writing this epistle. It hath been a controversy since St. Austin’s time, whether St. Paul here speaketh in his own person or in the person of a regenerate man, or only in the person of a Jew conflicting with the motions of his lusts, only by the assistance of the letter of the law without the aids and powerful assistance of the Holy Spirit; which is as great an instance of the force of prejudice and the heat of opposition to pervert the plainest truths, as can be happily produced; for I think nothing can be more evident and unquestionably true than this, that the *apostle doth not here speak of himself in his own person, or in the state he was then in*, but as the ancient commentators do interpret him, δι’ ἑαυτοῦ ὁ Απόστολος τὸν κοινὸν ἄνθρωπον δηλοῖ, by himself he represents man in common, and saith not as he might have done, you that are under the law are carnal, but τὰ ἐκείνων ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ χηματίζων καὶ τὸ τραχὺ σφοδρὸν ἐκλυνων καὶ λεαίνων τῇ περὶ ἑαυτὸν χηματολογία, *representing what belonged to them in his own person, and so taking off the harshness and mollifying the invidious-*

ness of the sentence by speaking of it in his own person, he saith, *I am carnal, sold under sin*. So Photius and Œcumenius. Theodoret also doth inform us that the apostle here introduceth verse 14, Τὸν πρὸ τῆς χάριτος ἄνθρωπον πολιορκούμενον ὑπὸ τῶν παθῶν, *a man before grace overcome by his passions; for he calls him carnal who had not yet obtained the assistance of the Holy Spirit*. And again, verse 23, he adds, that the apostle having discoursed all these things ὥστε δεῖξαι τίνες μὲν πρῶ τῆς χάριτος ἦμεν, *To show what we were before grace, and what we were made after grace, and as it were, taking upon himself the person of those who before grace were vanquished by sin, he groans and laments as a man set in the midst of his enemies; enslaved and constrained to serve, and seeing no help; and thus he shows the law unable to help us*. And so Origen also frequently in his commentary on the place; and St. Austin saith expressly and frequently, *Describiter homo sub lege positus ante gratiam. Liber expos, quat, propos, ex Epist. ad Rom. Quo loco videtur mihi Apostolus, transfigurasse in se hominem sub lege positum, ad simplic. Mediol, l. 1. Et in hæc verba, non ego operor, illud, &c., loquitur adhuc ex persona hominis sub lege constituti nondum sub gratia*: though he was pleased afterward to change his opinion, and so gave occasion to the perverting the plain sense of the apostle. For confutation of this dangerous opinion, I need not say much after the labours of Arminius, the Rev. Dr. Hammond, Mr. Bull, and Mr. Kettlewell, who have made it manifest.

“First. That it is usual with the apostle to make this *metaschematism*, or to speak especially of things that might be otherwise offensive or ungrateful, in his own name, when indeed they belong not to him, but to

other men ; as in these words, Rom. iii, 7, '*If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie, why am I also judged as a sinner?*' that is, not I, Paul, but I, who make this objection. So Gal. ii, 16, 17. 1 Cor. iv, 6, '*These things, μεταχηματισα, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes.*' 1 Cor. vi, 12 ; x, 22, 30 ; xiii, 2 ; Eph. ii, 3 ; 1 Thess. iv, 17.

"Secondly. That such things are in this chapter said of the person spoken of, as can by no means agree to *St. Paul*, or to any regenerate person : to which may be added,

"1. That had *St. Paul* spoken here of himself, considered in the state in which he was at the inditing of this epistle, he must have contradicted what he said of himself in the Epistle to the Thessalonians and to the Corinthians, which were written before this epistle. For (1) in his Epistle to the Thessalonians, he saith, 'Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe,' 1 Thess. ii, 10. In his Second Epistle to the Corinthians he speaks thus : 'This is our rejoicing, even the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have conversed in this world,' 2 Cor. i, 12. 'That he knew nothing by himself for which to condemn himself,' 1 Cor. iv, 4. 'That he kept under his body and brought it into subjection,' 1 Cor. ix, 27. Now can the man who is 'carnal,' and 'sold under sin,' who hath no power in him to do any good, who 'finds a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members,' call God and the church to witness to his holy and unblameable life ? Can he boast of keeping under

his fleshly body and bringing that into subjection, which, by his own confession, bringeth him into captivity? Can he who does not what he would in his mind and conscience do, but what he hates; not 'the good which he would, but the evil which he would not' do; can he, I say, rejoice in the testimony of his conscience? Can he honestly declare 'he knows nothing by himself, for which his conscience can condemn him?'

"2. How oft doth the apostle propose himself for a pattern to the churches unto whom he writes, requiring them to be followers of 'him, as he was also of Christ,' 1 Cor. xi, 1. And again, 'What things you have learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, these do, and the God of love and peace shall be with you,' Phil. iv, 8. That is, be you 'carnal, sold under sin,' living in the commission of the things you hate, and your mind condemns, and doing what you judge to be evil, and yielding yourselves 'captive to the law of sin which is in your members,' and then 'the God of love and peace shall be with you.' This sure, is an absurd, if not blasphemous exhortation, and yet, according to this exposition, it must be suitable to the mind of the apostle.

"3. With what indignation doth he reject the accusations of them who looked upon him, as 'walking after the flesh,' and how severely doth he threaten them, how peremptorily doth he reject their scandalous imputation! declaring that 'though he walk in the flesh, yet did he *not* walk according to the flesh,' 2 Cor. x, 2, 3; and yet if he were 'carnal, sold under sin;' if with the flesh he served the law of sin; if the law of the fleshly members 'warred against the law of his mind, and brought him into captivity to the law of sin;' he doth here in effect confess what there he

peremptorily denies, and with such indignation doth reject.

“4. This exposition of the *seventh chapter* makes it entirely to confute the chapter which immediately goes before, and that which follows after ; and it gives an invincible strength to the objections he endeavours to answer in the *sixth chapter*. The first objection there begins by way of inquiry, ‘What do we say then, Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?’ His second, by way of inquiry, ‘Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?’ ver. 15. ‘God forbid,’ saith he, that it should be thus with any Christian ; and yet, according to this exposition, it was thus with himself, one of the best of Christians ; for sure, he must continue in sin, who was still ‘sold under sin,’ still ‘serving the law of sin with his flesh ;’ still doing that evil he allowed not, the evil which he hated, and would not do ; and who was ‘still brought into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members.’

“Again, in his answer to these inquiries, he shows the Christian could not continue in, or live any longer in it, because he was ‘dead to sin,’ his ‘old man was crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth he might not serve sin,’ ver. 2, 6. And because being dead to, he was ‘freed from sin,’ ver. 7, he was made ‘free from sin,’ and ‘became the servant of righteousness.’ But can he that is ‘sold under sin,’ and ‘brought into captivity to the law of sin, which is in his members,’ be at the same time ‘dead to sin,’ and ‘free from sin?’ Can he who ‘with his flesh serves the law of sin,’ be said to ‘cease from sin, and not henceforth to serve sin?’ not ‘to obey it in the lusts thereof,’ ver. 12, not ‘to yield his members instruments of sin unto unrighteousness,’ ver. 13. Surely there is as clear an opposition between



the Christian represented in the sixth chapter, as free from sin, and in the seventh, as miserably enslaved to the law of sin and death which was in his members, as between light and darkness.

“Again, he saith expressly, chap. viii, 2, ‘The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.’ Whereas the person mentioned in the *seventh* ‘is sold under sin,’ is ‘brought into captivity to the law of sin,’ and crieth out under his bondage, ‘O miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ he, therefore, cannot be the person freed by the Spirit from the law of sin and death. In fine, this exposition of the close of this chapter contradicts the beginning of it; for there the apostle saith of himself, and all his Christian brethren, that this was only their state under the law, from which they are delivered, ‘that they might bring forth fruit unto God,’ and ‘serve him in newness of spirit.’ For **what** else can be the meaning of these words, verses 5, 6, ‘For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death: but now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve God in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter?’ So that they who make the apostle say of himself, that ‘he was brought into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members,’ and to cry out, ‘O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ that is, this body of sin which worketh death; make him also to confess, that ‘the motions of sin did still work in his members, to bring forth fruit unto death,’ and therefore that he was still in the flesh.”\*

The argument will be resumed in the next lecture.

\* Paraphrase and Commentary, vol. ii, pp. 37–39.

## LECTURE XIII.

## OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE DOCTRINE—CONTINUED.

“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”—Rom. vi, 2.

IN the present lecture I shall conclude the argument upon the seventh of Romans with several authorities for the exposition we give of it. In the extract from Dr. Whitby, in the preceding lecture, reference is made to the discussion of this passage by the celebrated James Arminius. In his Works, published at Frankfort, 1635, we have a dissertation of eighty-eight quarto pages upon the subject. The following are the propositions which he maintains:—

“I. I will show that the apostle, in this place, speaks not of himself as he then was, nor of a person under grace, but takes on himself the character of a person placed under the law.

“II. I will prove that this opinion has never been condemned in the church as heretical, but has always had some advocates among the doctors of the church.

“III. I will show that no heresy, either Pelagian, or of any other kind, can be derived from this view, but that it is most clearly opposed to Pelagianism, and plainly and designedly refutes his first fallacy, (*πρωτονψευδος*.)

“I might finish the discussion after having unfolded these three points, confining myself within the bounds of a necessary defence of my view, unless it might seem to some wise and suitable to confute with similar arguments the contrary opinion as it is explained especially at the present time. This I will do under two

other heads, subjoined to the former three, which shall be analogous, and, as it were, parallel to the last two.

“IV. Therefore I will prove that the sense which some of our modern doctors give to the apostle in this place was approved by none of the ancient doctors of the church, not even by Augustine, but was always repudiated and refuted by him and some others.

“V. And, finally, I will show that this opinion, as set forth by many at the present day, is injurious to grace, and adverse to good morals.”

Under the second proposition the learned author gives us the views of the ancient fathers. He thus proceeds:—

“Now we come to the second division of our proposition, which it seems proper to discuss, for this purpose, that it may be clear to all that the opinion which I defend is not of late origin, or formed in my own brain, or borrowed from any heretic: but that it is very ancient, and that it was approved by a large part of the doctors of the primitive church: while by those who interpreted the passage differently, it was not rejected to such an extent that they deemed it worthy to be sealed with the mark of heresy.

“*Irenæus* (book iii, ch. 22) thus cites this passage: ‘On account of this, therefore, he is the seal of our salvation, who being born of a virgin, is Emanuel, the Lord himself: since it was the Lord who saved them, as they could not be saved through themselves. And on account of this, Paul, declaring the weakness of *man*, says, “I know that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing;” signifying that the excellency of salvation is not of us, but of God. And again: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Then he introduces the Deliverer, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”’

“He does not speak of a regenerate person, or a believer, or a Christian, but simply of a man; which epithet neither the Scripture nor the fathers are accustomed to apply to him who is a Christian, a believer and regenerate.

“*Tertullian*, in his book ‘*De Pudicitia*,’ chap. 17, says, ‘For although he denied that any good dwelt in his flesh—but this was according to the law of the letter under which he was then placed—yet he frees us from the infirmity of the flesh, according to the law of the Spirit to which he unites us. For, he says, the law of the Spirit of life has made me free from the law of sin and death. For although he seems to argue on the side of Judaism, he marks out an upright course, and a full amount of discipline for us, for the sake of whom, burdened by the law through the flesh, God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.’

“Here *Tertullian* clearly affirms that this passage is to be explained as referring to a man who is under the law of the letter. Nor is it of much importance in opposition to this, if any one should say that this book was written by him when he was involved in heresy: for he was not heretical on this subject, and it appears from this that the opinion was then current that this chapter should be thus understood.

“*Origen* on the seventh chapter of *Romans*. In respect to what he says, ‘I am carnal, sold under sin:’ here, as a teacher of the church, he takes on himself the character of the weak; as he says elsewhere, ‘I am made weak to the weak, that I might gain the weak.’ And here, therefore, to the weaker, (that is, to the carnal,) and to those who were sold under sin, Paul is made a carnal man, and one sold under sin, and he speaks those things which it is usual for them to speak, either

for excuse or accusation. Therefore, speaking in the character of one of them, he says, But I am carnal, sold under sin; that is, living according to the flesh, and brought under the power of sin by lust and concupiscence, 'for that which I do, I allow not,' &c.

"Shortly after he remarks: 'And here Paul as carnal says, "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me:" but Paul as spiritual says in another place, "But I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." As, therefore, he ascribes his labours not to himself, but to the grace of God which wrought in him; so also, as carnal, he ascribes his works which are not good, not to himself, but to sin which dwells and works in him. As he says, "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." For Christ does not yet dwell in him, nor is his body the temple of the Holy Spirit. Yet this person, whose character is set forth, is not in all respects averse (*alieuns*) to the good, but in his purposes and desires begins to seek that which is good. Nevertheless he cannot as yet in fact and in his deeds attain to that which is good. For there is such a degree of weakness in those who have reached the beginning of conversion, that when they wish to do immediately every thing which is right, this effect does not immediately follow their desire,' &c.

"*Cyprian*, treating of the strife of the flesh and the spirit in his sixth sermon on the Lord's Prayer, also in his book '*De Singularitate Clericorum*,' refers to the passage in the fifth of Galatians, 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit,' and not to this passage in Romans. But that he understood this passage in the seventh of Romans as referring to the dominion, and not merely



to the indwelling of sin, is evident from his prologue 'De Cardinalibus Operibus Christi,' where, among other things, he says this: 'If I do not know who has inscribed this law upon my members, that with so violent tyranny it should oppress the Spirit, and the better and more noble nature should yield to the worse, it is necessary that I should endure it patiently, if I do not comprehend the Architect of the universe.' And soon after, in the same prologue, he says: 'It is difficult to understand why this law of sin should overpower the law of righteousness in these and similar things, and why enfeebled reason, when it might stand, so miserably falls: especially when that weakness depends on the sentence of damnation, and the ancient transgression received this inevitable punishment.'

"*Chrysostom*, professedly discussing and explaining this passage in his commentary on the seventh chapter of Romans, speaks thus, agreeing with the authors before quoted: 'Moreover, he subjoins this: "But I am carnal," describing a man living under the law and before the law.' And soon after: 'Wherefore sin is opposed to the natural law; for this is what he speaks of when he says, "the law of my mind;" it inflicts on the law of our nature a continual contest and warfare, when it arrays the forces of sin: for the Mosaic law was finally added over and above what was necessary.'

"'But yet these laws (the former showing what ought to be done, and the latter approving it) have not effected any thing in this contest against sin: so great is the tyranny of sin, and so continually is it victorious and triumphant. This indeed Paul means when, mentioning the conflict with opposing and victorious sin, he says, "But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and

bringing me into captivity to the law of sin," &c. For he does not say merely conquering me, but bringing me into captivity to the law of sin. Nor does he say, bringing me into captivity to the impulse of the flesh, or to the carnal nature, but, to the law of sin, that is, to the tyranny and power of sin.'

" 'Soon after he says, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Do you see how great is the tyranny of wickedness, how it overcomes even the mind that delights in the law of God? For there is no reason, he says, that any one should say that I am in captivity to sin, regarding with hatred the law of God, and averse to it. For I delight in and consent to it, and fly to it. But it has not been able to save me, flying to it. But Christ has saved me, flying from it. You grant this; what excellency, then, there is in grace!'

" 'And on chap. viii, ver. 2, "The grace of the Holy Spirit has put an end to this arduous war by slaying sin, by which it is effected that we should have an easy contest, which, even at first, places crowns upon us, and afterward leads us into battle surrounded by many auxiliary forces."'

" *Basil* the Great, in his first book concerning baptism, fol. 409, says, 'But let us bring forward what he has said elsewhere, delivering the same to us in a more rebuking manner, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not," &c. And pursuing this same train of thought, that it is impossible that he who is held by sin should serve the Lord, he clearly shows to us our deliverer from this tyranny when he says, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God," &c.'

" Soon after he says, 'It is therefore very necessary,

according to what has been said and the like, if we have not received the grace of God in vain, that we should be first freed from the dominion of the devil, who leads him who is bound by sin to the wicked acts which he does not choose : and then we may become the disciples of the Lord, by denying all things present and ourselves, and by laying aside affection for this life, as the Lord himself said, " If any man will come to me, let him deny himself," &c.'

"In his '*Moralium Summa*,' xxiii, ch. ii, fol. 377, he says, 'For he who is unwillingly led by any sin ought to have known, that he is ruled by another sin pre-existing in him, to which he is a willing servant, so that he is led by the first, without his own consent, even to do those things which he does not choose. As in Rom. vii, 14-17, "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."'

"The same thing in his '*Quæstionum Compendium Explicatarum*,' quæs. 16, fol. 563: 'The soul which suffers the dominion of the desires, is not permitted by them to be free to do those things which it wishes, according to the view of the apostle already mentioned, who said, "But I am carnal, sold under sin: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."'

And again: "Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." While God himself permits that this should happen to us for good, to see if in any way the soul might come to a knowledge of that which holds it in subjection, through those things which it suffers unwillingly, and having known

that itself is unwillingly a slave to sin, might escape from the snare of the devil, seeking the mercy of God which is ready to receive those who are lawfully penitent.'

"*Theodoret*, on the seventh chapter of Romans, says: '*But I am carnal*. He introduces a man, before receiving grace, beset by the motions and disorder of the mind. For he calls him carnal who has not yet obtained spiritual grace. "For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." This is well accomplished by the law, in that it teaches what is evil, and brings into the mind a hatred of it. But those expressions, "I would," and "I hate," signify not any necessity, but a weakness. For we do not sin under the impulse of necessity, or of any power, but being seduced by pleasure we do those things which we abhor as sinful and flagitious.'

" 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man.' He calls the mind the inward man.

" 'But I see another law in my members, warring,' &c. He calls sin the law of sin. But this performs its work when the bodily disturbances of the mind spring up, and the soul, on account of that sluggishness in which it has been involved from the beginning, cannot restrain them: but it has yielded its own liberty, and endures being a slave to them. Yet although it is a slave, it regards its servitude with hatred, and praises him who blames this servitude. When the apostle had discussed all these things, that he might show what we were before grace, and what after grace, and having assumed, as it were, the character of those who before grace are beset by sin, surrounded as in the midst of enemies, and forced into servitude and compelled to be a slave, and seeing no aid from without, he indeed groans and laments deeply: he shows that

help cannot be obtained from the law, and cries out, 'O wretched man,' &c.

"On chap. viii: 'There is, therefore, now no condemnation,' &c. For now the disorders of the mind do not overcome us against our will, for we have received the grace of the divine Spirit."

"'For the law of the Spirit of life.' As he styles sin the law of sin, so he calls the life-giving Spirit the law of the Spirit of life. He says, that its (the Spirit's) grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, has given a twofold liberty to you. For not only has it broken the power of sin, but it has even destroyed the tyranny of death."

"*Macarius*, Homily 1:—"Adam, transgressing the command of God, and obeying the wicked serpent, sold himself to the devil: and so that wicked one took possession of his soul, that noble creature which God made after his own image, as the apostle also says, "Having spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them through the cross." For on this account the Lord came, that he might expel them and recover his own habitation and his own temple, viz., man. Hence the soul is said to be a body of darkness and sin, as long as there are in it the shades of sin; because there it lives in an evil world of darkness, and there it is held captive. As Paul also, speaking of the body of sin and death, says, "that the body of sin might be destroyed." And again, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" On the contrary, the soul which has trusted in God, and been freed from sin, having been made dead to the life of darkness, and has received the light of the Holy Spirit as its life, afterward continues to live therein: because it is herein governed by divine light."

"Hence it is evident that *Macarius* understood this passage to refer to a man who was subject to the spirit



of darkness, a slave of sin, a captive of Satan, who has not yet become dead to sin, not yet received the light of the Holy Spirit; that is, who is not yet born again of the Spirit of Christ.

“*Damascenus*, lib. iv, *Orthodoxæ Fidei*, cap. 23, explains this matter finely, so that it will not be tedious to give his opinion more extendedly in his own words, as they have been rendered into Latin by his translator :—

“ ‘The law of God,’ he says, ‘coming to our mind, draws to itself and excites our conscience. Our conscience also is called the law of our mind. But the suggestion of the evil one, that is, the law of sin, also coming to the members of our flesh, by means of it obtains for itself admission to us : for we, voluntarily transgressing the law of God once, and admitting the suggestion of the evil one, give him an entrance, being made slaves by ourselves to sin : wherefore our body is readily drawn to it : therefore the odour and perception of sin clinging to our bodies, that is, concupiscence and the lust of the body, is called the law of sin in our carnal members. Therefore the law of the mind, that is, the conscience, delights in the law of God, that is, in his command, toward which it indeed is well disposed. But the law of sin, that is, the suggestion through the law which is in the members, that is, through the lust of the body, its inclination and impulses, and through the irrational part of the soul, contends against the law of my mind, that is, the conscience, and brings me, consenting to the law of God, and not performing it, yet not desiring sin, into captivity, through the persuasive power of the desire and the concupiscence of the body, and causes that part of the soul which is brute and destitute of reason, as I have said, to wander, and persuades it to serve sin. “For

what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," (for he assumed our flesh, but not our sin,) "condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." For the Spirit strives against our weakness, and gives power to the law of the mind against the law which is in our members.'

"*Theophylact*, on the seventh chapter to Romans. He says, 'I am carnal;' that is, human nature universally, both before the ordaining of the law, and during the continuance of the law, had the whole crowd of the desires collected around it. For we were not made mortal only by the transgression of Adam; but our nature received depraved affections, being sold under sin, and plainly subject to the power and dominion of sin, so that it cannot raise up its head."

"And soon after: 'Therefore the law could not indeed cure this weakness, although it might suggest what should be done; but Christ, when he came, effected the cure.'

" 'Therefore this is the design of the apostle in those things which he has said, and which he is about to say, to demonstrate that human nature has received incurable wounds, and that it cannot be restored to health by any other, except by Christ only.'

"And afterward: 'O wretched man,' &c. The natural law could avail nothing, but the tyranny of sin was victorious. Whence, then, is there hope of salvation?"

" 'I thank God through Jesus Christ.' For he effected that which the law could not. For he has freed me from the weakness of the body, inspiring it with strength, and affording comfort, so that it may no longer be oppressed by the tyranny of sin."

“*Ambrose*, on the Epistle to the Romans, or some other who may be the author of those commentaries, or an interpolator on the seventh chapter. ‘To be sold under sin is to derive our origin from Adam who first sinned, and by our own fault to be made subject to sin; as *Isaiah* says, “For your iniquities have ye sold yourselves.” For Adam sold himself first, and by this means all his seed has become subject to sin. Wherefore man is too weak to observe the precepts of the law, unless he be strengthened by divine aid: hence it is that he says, “The law is spiritual, but I am carnal,” &c.; that is, the law is firm, and just, and blameless, but man is weak, and subject to the sin of his first parent, so that he cannot use his own power in obeying the law: so he must fly to the mercy of God, that he may escape the severity of the law, and, being delivered from his sins, for the future resist his enemy through the favour of God.’”

“Soon after: ‘But how to perform that which is good I find not.’ Therefore that which is commanded by the law pleases him, and there is the desire of doing it, but power and ability to perform is wanting; since he is so oppressed by the power of sin, that he cannot go whither he wishes, nor can he oppose, since another is master of his powers.”

“Soon after: ‘The apostle, that he may set forth the grace of God, explains from how great evils he has delivered man; that he might show what misery he has derived from Adam, and what benefits he whom the law could not aid has obtained through Christ. Let the whole passage be examined.’

“*Jerome*, on the ninth chapter of *Daniel*, on those words, ‘We have sinned,’ &c.:—‘And surely the three youths had not transgressed, and they were not of such an age when they were carried away into Babylon, that

they should be punished for their own sins. Therefore these spoke in the character of the people, as that passage of the apostle is to be understood, "For what I would, that do not I," &c.'

"But let us come to *Augustine*, and see what he thought of this passage, since my opinion is loaded and pressed down by the weight of his authority. Thus then he speaks, in his 'Exposition of certain propositions in the Epistle to the Romans:—' "If, then, I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law, that it is good." The law is indeed defended from all accusation: but care must be taken lest any one may think that in these words the free choice of our will is taken away, for it is not so. For here a man is described as placed under the law, before receiving grace.'

"Shortly after: ' "I see another law in my members," &c. He speaks of the law of sin, by which every one through the habits of the flesh is firmly bound. He says that this is at variance with the law of his mind, and that it brings him into captivity to the law of sin. Wherefore the man who is not yet under grace is understood to be described. For if the carnal habits only opposed, and did not lead into captivity, there would be no condemnation. For in this there is condemnation, that we comply with and serve our depraved carnal desires. But if such desires do exist, and are not entirely wanting, and yet we do not obey them, we are not in captivity, and we are now under grace, of which he speaks when he exclaims concerning the help of his deliverer, that he could through the grace of love do that which fear through the law could not effect. For he cries out, "O wretched man," &c.; and adds, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Then he begins to describe a man

placed under grace, which is the third degree of those four which we have distinguished.'

"To Simplicianus, bishop of the church of Milan, book i.:—'But yet, not satisfied with past investigation and explanation, I have examined more cautiously and attentively those same words of the apostle, and the tenor of his ideas, (namely, the seventh chapter to Romans,) lest I might have passed too carelessly over any thing in it. For you would not think that those passages had been examined thoroughly, if the understanding of them should be easy and expeditious. For at first you wished us to explain the disputed question in reference to that passage where it is written, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid," to the place where he says, "I find then a law, that when I would do good," &c.; and, I believe, even to that, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." In this place the apostle seems to me to have transformed himself to a man placed under the law, whose words he speaks in accordance with his character.'"

"Hence it is evident, in the first place, that the church at that time had prescribed nothing definitely concerning the sense of that passage: for Simplicianus, a bishop, and indeed in the very church in which Ambrose had before been bishop, would not have asked the opinion of Augustine, but it would have been necessary to understand the passage according to the prescribed interpretation. Secondly. That Augustine, after having weighed the matter diligently, says that the passage is to be understood of an individual under the law.

"In the same book:—'I,' he says, 'was alive without the law once;' where he shows that he does not



speak in his own person particularly, but generally in the character of the old man.

“In the same :—‘Then he subjoins the reason why it is so : “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal.” In this he sufficiently shows that the law could not be fulfilled except by the spiritual, who such do not become except by grace.’

“And soon after :—‘When he says, “But I am carnal,” he explains also in what sense he is carnal. For in a certain sense even those are called carnal who are placed under grace, being now redeemed by the blood of Christ, and born again through faith ; to whom the same apostle says, 1 Cor. iii, “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual,” &c. But he who is not yet under grace, but under the law, is carnal in such a sense that he is not yet born again from sin, but is sold under the law by sin, since the price of deadly pleasure includes that sweetness by which he is deceived and delights to do contrary to the law, while, as it is less lawful, so much the more is it pleasing, &c. And he afterward consents to the law of God, not in that he does what it prohibits, but in that he does what he would not do. For he is overcome, not being as yet delivered by grace, although now by the law he both knew that he did wrong and was unwilling to do it. But in reference to what follows, where he says, “Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” He does not speak thus because he does not consent to the commission of sin, although he consents to the law to the condemnation of this act. But he speaks as yet in the character of a man placed under the law, and not yet under grace ; of one who is immediately drawn away to doing wrong by concupiscence ruling over him, and by the sweetness of forbidden sin deceiving him, although a knowledge of

the law partly condemns this course. But, moreover, he says, "It is not I that do it," because being overcome he acts ; for desire, to which, overcoming him, he yields, effects this. But that he may not be given up, and that the mind of the man may be more strong against desire, is the work of grace, of which he is about afterward to speak. Examine also the following remarks.'

"Soon after: 'To will is present with me.'" He said this in reference to the facility of doing it. For what is more easy for a man placed under the law than to desire the good and to do the evil,' &c."

"In the same place: 'But all this is said thus, that it may be shown that the captive must not presume on his own strength. Here he accused the Jews as proudly boasting of the deeds of the law, when they were carried away by their lust to committing whatever was unlawful, while the law of which they boasted said, "Thou shalt not covet." Therefore the man thus overcome must speak humbly; condemned, a captive, and by no means a victor when the law was made known, but rather a transgressor, he must humbly exclaim, "O wretched man that I am!" &c.'"

Augustine, however, in his controversy with Pelagius, found it convenient to abandon these views, clearly and strongly as they are here maintained, and Arminius proceeds to refute his arguments on the other side. And besides the fathers, he quotes Bede, S. Paulinus, Nicholas de Lyra, Cardinal Hugo, Thomas Aquinas, Haimo, Bruno, Erasmus, Bucer, and Wolfgang Musculus, as advocating the same opinions.

Dr. Macknight on Rom. vii, 15, says:—

"They who think the apostle is here describing his own case, and the cases of other regenerated persons, should consider that he does not speak of single in-

stances of omission of duty, and commission of sin ; for the words which he uses, *κατεργαζομαι πρασσω ποιω*, all denote a *continuance*, or *habit of acting*. Now how such a habit of doing evil, and neglecting good, can be attributed to any regenerated person, and especially to the apostle Paul, who, before this Epistle to the Romans was written, told the Thessalonians, ‘Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved among you,’ I confess I do not comprehend.”

Rosenmuller’s views are as follows :—

“Εγω δε σαρκικος ειμι.] I indeed am weak, carried away by vile affections ; or I am given up to them. Εγω, again the apostle speaks in his own person concerning any one not a Christian, who may be either a Jew or a heathen. I wonder that Coppius has assented to the opinion of those who think that Paul said this concerning himself, and also concerning all Christians. This seems evidently contrary not only to all the words immediately following, but also to the entire design of the apostle, and the whole thread of his discourse. Indeed he wishes to show that no man can easily be amended in heart by the law alone ; that the Mosaic law also wants the power to renew the heart, and that a man long accustomed to sin labours under such infirmity of mind, that when he may most wish and desire to follow the law, he finds himself unequal to this task ; and he experiences so great and continual a contest between the animal and rational propensity, that he does that which he does not approve and is unwilling to do, and cannot accomplish that which he approves and desires to follow ; but there is in the Christian religion this power of amending the minds of men, which alone is able to imbue one with the strength necessary to holy living. See particularly

chap. viii, verses 2, 3, where the apostle teaches expressly that the νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς, supplies that which neither the law of Moses nor any other law ever yet furnished or can furnish."

Dr. Bloomfield, on Rom. vii, 14, says:—

"In the interpretation of these words commentators differ. Augustine, and most of the early modern ones, (especially those of the Calvinistic school,) maintain that the apostle here speaks of *himself*, and of *regenerate Christians*, and means this as the language of penitent remorse. But after all that has been urged in favour of this interpretation by Doddridge, Teller, and especially by Carpzov, (to whose note I refer the reader,) it may justly be considered as untenable.\*"

Professor Stuart, in his learned commentary upon this much-contested passage, supposes "the apostle to be here speaking of himself when in a *legal state*, or under the law, and before he was united to Christ." And he says, "The most ancient fathers of the church, without a dissenting voice, so far as we have any means of ascertaining their views, were united in the belief, that an *unregenerate, unsanctified* person is described in Rom. vii, 5–25. So Origen, Tertullian, Chrysostom, and Theodoret. In this state the views of the church remained down to the time of Augustine."

After giving the names of the principal commentators who follow Augustine, he proceeds:—"On the other hand, besides all the ancient Greek, and some of the Latin fathers, there are many distinguished men who have defended the sentiment which has been above exhibited. Such are, Erasmus, Raphel, Episcopius, Limborch, Turretine, Le Clerc, Heumann, Bucer, Schomer, Franke, G. Arnold, Bengel, Rienhard,

\* See Bloomfield's Critical Digest, also his Greek Testament with English notes.

Storr, Flatt, Knapp, Tholuck, and, as far as I know, all the evangelical commentators of the present time on the continent of Europe. Most of the English Episcopal Church, also, for many years, and not a few of the Scotch, Dutch, and English Presbyterian and Congregational divines, have adopted the same interpretation. I cannot but believe, that the time is not far distant when there will be but one opinion among intelligent Christians about the passage in question; as there was but one before the dispute of Augustine with Pelagius. In this respect there is ground of trust, that the ancient and modern churches will yet fully harmonize." For the argument at length see "Stuart's Commentary" *in loc.*

I need not here insert the expositions and arguments of Messrs. Wesley and Fletcher, and the Wesleyan commentators. These are so generally read, that a simple reference to them will be sufficient.\*

I have now considered the leading passages of Scripture which are adduced in proof of the necessary continuance of indwelling sin through life. I now leave it to the candid to determine whether these scriptures afford that doctrine the smallest support. Can any one go so far as to allege that in these proof-texts there is sufficient evidence to make the doctrine which they are brought to prove an article of faith, and to brand the opposite view as heresy? So far as this many have gone; and the position is maintained by distinguished and learned ministers at the present day. How any right-minded Christian divine can stake so much upon a theory so slenderly sustained is indeed strange, and must be left without judgment upon our part. But

\* Those who may wish to consult these authorities, I would refer to Wesley's Notes on the New Testament, Fletcher's Last Check to Antinomianism, Clarke's, Coke's, and Benson's Commentaries.



as for us, let us make our appeal to the law and the testimony, and then abide the result. If we hold no doctrine which is condemned by Christ or his holy apostles, we may well forego the good opinion of men who judge of our doctrinal views *a priori*, without law or evidence. We must not, however, treat them uncharitably. They think themselves right. What they allege in favour of their views looks to them like proof, and all we can adduce on the other hand has with them no weight. Well, here we must rest the matter until God shall give more light, or perhaps until the light of eternity, which will correct all errors, shall dawn upon the darkened understanding.

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## LECTURE XIV.

### PERIOD WHEN BELIEVERS MAY BE ENTIRELY SANCTIFIED —ERRORS CONCERNING.

“Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” Rom. vi, 1, 2.

I SHALL next proceed to an examination of opposing theories. Our opponents do not merely deny the attainableness of entire sanctification in this life, but, on the other hand, maintain that sin cannot be wholly removed until death comes in to complete the work of its destruction. As we have seen, the Rev. Dr. Snodgrass maintains “that the dissolution of the body, as followed by its resurrection, is one of the appointed means of sanctification.”

So those who oppose us have a theory to maintain. And after answering the leading objections which they

have seen proper to urge against us, it will be in place to carry the war into their camp. I shall now proceed to offer reasons against this notion of the necessary continuance of indwelling sin until death. There will be no chance here with the class of theologians who maintain the proposition I now oppose, for a play upon the word *necessary*. We agree, I presume, in the sense in which the *possibility* or *impossibility*, in question, is to be understood. Calvin says, “I call that *impossible which has never happened yet, and which is prevented by the ordination and decree of God from ever happening in the future.*” And Dr. Snodgrass says :—“As to the meaning of the word **ATTAINABLE**, when applied to the state described in the preceding remarks, we have no other purpose than to use it in its most obvious and popular sense—as importing the *practicability* of the thing to which it refers. An attainable thing is something the attainment of which is practicable ; an unattainable thing is something the attainment of which is not practicable.”\* I understand, then, Calvin and Dr. Snodgrass to agree in the doctrine that entire sanctification in this life is “impossible,” being “prevented by the ordination and decree of God,” “is something the attainment of which is impracticable,” and this I understand logically to imply that the existence of sin in the regenerate until death is a necessary consequence of a divine arrangement. The main principle then being thus understood, I object to it for the following reasons :—

1. It makes the continuance of sin in believers until death their misfortune, and not their fault.

I do not admit, nor do I see how any one can rationally assert, that just blame can be attached to a moral agent for not attaining what is “impracticable—impos-

\* Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, p. 29.

sible—prevented by the ordination and decree of God.” All the explanations offered here, either by the old school or the new school Calvinists, are lost upon me, for I cannot feel their force. I can see no grounds of moral justice upon which I am blameworthy for the continuance of sin in my heart upon this principle. If it is in accordance with a divine arrangement, for the purpose of securing some good end, that believers are through life to be annoyed by their corruptions, who is in fault if those corruptions are not wholly eradicated? The argument is plain, and can scarcely be improved by illustration. And though to our opponents it may look like a mere bubble, it will probably continue to appear to us like an immoveable rock.

The simple fact, then, that all are conscious their inward corruptions, in whole and in part, all of them, are wrong, entirely unnecessary, and offensive to God, is sufficient to show the radical error of the position I oppose. For who that believes that the destruction of his inward corruptions is “prevented by the decree of God,” until “the dissolution of the body,” which, in the wisdom of God, is constituted “one of the appointed means of sanctification,” can feel it very wrong to suffer on under the weight of “the body of sin” “all the days of his appointed time until his change come?” Who will condemn himself for the continued molestations of the brood of vipers, which God has determined to leave to nestle in his heart until the appointed remedy arrives? From this argument we are naturally led on to another, which grows out of it.

2. The doctrine that entire sanctification is unattainable in this life effectually nourishes spiritual sloth.

Who will ever make a serious effort to get rid of a *necessary evil*? Hooker, with an evidence of philosophical truth that no man can gainsay or doubt, says :

“The will, notwithstanding, doth not incline to have or do that which reason teacheth to be good, unless the same do also teach it to be possible. For albeit the appetite, being more general, may wish any thing which seemeth good, be it never so impossible ; yet for such things, the reasonable will of man doth never seek. Let reason teach impossibility in any thing, and the will of man doth let it go ; a thing impossible it doth not affect, the impossibility thereof being manifest.”\*

Can Dr. Snodgrass rationally seek entire sanctification in this life ? Can he urge others to seek it ? Can he put forth a single voluntary effort to shake off the body of sin ? I see not how he can. Will he not naturally practise according to the views of Cartwright, the great father of the Nonconformists, and opponent of Whitgift, who says, “We may not pray in this life to be free from all sin, because we must always pray, ‘Forgive us our sins ?’” And Witsius, the great Calvinistic reformer, who says : “Seeing God has expressly declared that he does not give his people absolute perfection in this life, it is the duty of all to acquiesce in this dispensation of the divine will, nor are they allowed to beg of God to grant them that perfection here, which they know he has not appointed for this, but for the other life.”†

These are the logical results and practical workings of the doctrine here opposed. And what other results can rationally be expected in any instance ? Who can pray for, or use any efforts to obtain, what he firmly believes to be unattainable ? or, which amounts to the same thing, seek now what God “has not appointed for this life, but for the other ?”

Perhaps our opponents will say, it is our duty to

\* Ecclesiastical Polity, book i, chap. 7.

† Economy of the Covenants, vol. ii, p. 61.

oppose sin even though it may not be totally destroyed in this life : we must go on conquering and subduing it as far as is practicable, and expect the final triumph after death : that this view presents sufficient motives for action.

But this does not neutralize our argument, for still it remains a fact, according to the theory here opposed, that though sin may be kept under, it cannot be overcome until death. Now how would this principle operate in other things ? Apply it to the case of the intemperate. Tell them that temperance is a gradual work, that never can be completed in this life—that the intemperate cannot be perfectly reformed so long as they live : they may get the better of their habits, and it is their duty to reform, but that death “is one of the appointed means” of cure, and consequently it is vain for any one to expect to become perfectly temperate in this life :—how many drunkards would be reformed upon this plan ? What effect would this doctrine produce upon the great temperance reform now so gloriously progressing ? I can anticipate the answer. And I am aware that no valid reason can be given why the doctrine I here oppose should not have the same paralyzing effect upon the soul of the Christian that the gradual plan, as above stated, would have upon the efforts of the intemperate to reform. It may be said the cases are not parallel. But I see not in what respects, so far as the points in question are concerned, the parallel is not perfect ; nor why the gradualist is not in the one case as much as in the other liable to the charge of cutting the sinews of exertion.

3. The doctrine that death “is one of the appointed means of sanctification,” is attributing to death a work which, in the word of God, is always attributed to other instrumentalities, but never to death.



We read of "being sanctified by the Holy Ghost," Rom. xv, 16; 1 Pet. i, 2,—of being sanctified "through the truth," John xvii, 17, 19,—of being sanctified "by the blood of the covenant," Heb. x, 29,—and "the blood of Christ," Heb. ix, 14. See also 1 John i, 7. Of being sanctified "by faith," Acts xv, 9, and xxvi, 18. But where do we read of *being sanctified by death*? If the hypothesis I oppose were true, should we not expect to find the work of sanctification, or at least the completion of it, somewhere in the Bible predicated of death as its instrumental cause, in language somewhat similar to that which is employed in relation to the truth, the word, faith, &c.? But where is that language to be found? Not in the Bible; and I would that I could say, Nor in the writings of any respectable Christian author; but alas! this I have not the happiness to be able to say.

4. It is adding a qualification to the Scripture doctrine of sanctification, not only over and above any thing we have in the Bible upon the subject, but altogether contrary to the whole tenor of God's word.

The word of God says, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." The command, "Be ye holy," is now urged. The duty of seeking entire sanctification is urged as of present obligation. "Go on to perfection;" "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Now where is the qualification of our opponents authorized? Where is it said, *Nevertheless, these commands and exhortations cannot be fully carried out until the dissolution of the body*? Would not this give a new feature to the Christian system? Would it not contradict its entire spirit and sense upon the subject of the necessary preparation for heaven? So it seems to me; and of course the theory I oppose

appears to me to be "another gospel"—a doctrine which I am bound not only not to receive, but to oppose to the utmost of my limited capacity.

5. The doctrine that "the dissolution of the body is one of the appointed means of sanctification" is dishonourable to Christ.

Christ came "to abolish death,"—"that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," 2 Tim. i, 10; Heb. ii, 14. And it is said, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," 1 Cor. xv, 26. And now shall death—ignoble death—said to be under the *power* of the *devil*, and called "the last enemy," come to the Saviour's help? Must this foe to man be the instrument of accomplishing the highest purposes of redeeming mercy? Will all other instrumentality come short of the consummation of the great work of human emancipation from the corruptions of sin? And does the peculiar honour of finally triumphing over the power of sin belong to death? The saints in heaven are represented as celebrating the *blood of Christ* as the instrument of their *redemption*, (Rev. v, 9,) but seem not to know that *death* acted a prominent part in the business. And I have no doubt that if our opponents ever get to heaven, and I charitably hope they will, they will have forgotten their present theory, and will join in the same song, of ascribing their salvation to the blood of Christ alone. Christ, the great Captain of our salvation, needs not death to help him to accomplish his work. He will destroy sin, death, and the devil, and triumph by his own power over every foe. He will "deliver those who, through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage," by his grace and Spirit, through the word of his truth, without dependance upon his subjugated foe for the consummation of the purposes of his mercy.

6. The doctrine of the necessary continuance of sin until death, and that death is the means of the final extirpation of sin from the soul of the believer, supposes a connection between sin and the body which is wholly unauthorized either by Scripture or sound philosophy.

I know not upon what approved system of physics or psychology sin is made to hold such a connection with the body that it cannot be separated from the soul until the body is dissolved by death. I have always been accustomed to suppose that *sin* was *in the soul* exclusively. But let us hear the statement of the opposite view from the learned Dr. Snodgrass. He says,—

“The idea of a perfectly holy spirit remaining in connection with a corruptible body, would present *an incongruity*, to which no parallel could be found in any of the other arrangements or works of God. It is not only true that his plans are wise, but also that their wisdom can be generally seen and appreciated by the candid and careful observer. But who could regard it as fit or reasonable, that, after the souls of believers are delivered from the last taint of corruption, they should still be confined to such a body as this? As an apostle describes it, it is a ‘*vile*’ body—a body possessing many properties, in view of which we have reason to be humbled—a body distinguished by great infirmity and weakness—easily brought into a state of languor and fatigue—subject to innumerable ills and distresses—furnishing many occasions of temptation to sin, and acting as a constant weight upon the upward tendencies and movements of the soul.”\*

The confidence with which our author pronounces the case supposed of “a perfectly holy spirit remaining in connection with a corruptible body” “*an incongru-*

\* Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, pp. 90, 91.

ity," and decides what would be "fit and reasonable" in the case, would seem to imply that the question is to turn, at least in some measure, upon our general notions of *congruity* and *fitness*, and that he at least is capable of judging of what would be *congruous* and *fit* in the premises. But though I am far from conceding that there is any thing incongruous in the supposition, every thing considered, yet I doubt whether this is the proper test of truth in cases of the class. There are many things clearly revealed in the word of God which appear incongruous, "to which no parallel could be found in any of the other arrangements or works of God," which we are still bound to receive as truths. This the learned author will scarcely question.

But what *incongruity* is there in the conception of a being clad in the habiliments of mortality, and yet perfectly conformed to the will of God? Was there any such striking incongruity in the person and life of Jesus Christ? If so, I am not aware of it. And considering the *amplitude* of the provisions of grace, and the *power* of that system of human restoration constituted by Christ, where is the incongruity in supposing the sufficiency of that system to give present and immediate deliverance from sin—to enable the believer to stand "complete in all the will of God?" Is not *sin* in a *believer* a most glaring *incongruity*? So it appears to me.

The force of the gentleman's argument, however, seems to turn upon the infirmities, vileness, and corruptibility of the body. I do not doubt that all this is the fruit of sin; but that it necessarily implies the continuance of sin, inward or outward, I do doubt. "As an apostle describes it," (Phil. iii, 21,) he says, "It is a 'vile' body." This is true; but where is the evidence that the term *vile* implies *moral defilement*?

The word ταπεινωσις, here rendered *vile*, according to Dr. Robinson, signifies “a making low, humiliation, depression. In the New Testament, ‘the being brought low,’ low estate, humiliation.”\* And he notes the following places where the word occurs:—Luke i, 48: ἐπεβλεψεν ἐπὶ τὴν ταπεινωσιν τῆς δούλης αὐτοῦ—“Hath regarded the *low estate* of his handmaiden.” Acts viii, 33: ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει κ. τ. λ.—“In his humiliation his judgment was taken away,” &c. James i, 10: ὁ δε πλουσιος ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει αὐτοῦ—“But the rich, in that he is made low.” In the Septuagint the word is used in the place of the Hebrew שָׁפָל,—*lowness, a low place or condition*; (see Psa. cxxxvi, 23;) in the common version rendered “low estate;” and צָרָה,—*affliction, oppression*, Neh. ix, 9, rendered “affliction.”†

How, then, is it to the gentleman’s purpose at all that the apostle calls the body *vile*, that is, low, humble, afflicted, &c.? Does that prove at all that the soul, so long as it is associated with the body, must be the seat of sinful affections? Not that I can see. All the *vileness* here attributed to the body no more makes for the doctrine of the necessary continuance of sin in the soul until death, than it proves that the Saviour was a sinner because it is said, “in his *humiliation* (ταπεινωσει, *lowliness*, or *vileness* if you please) his judgment was taken away.”

It will be proper here to notice the manner in which our author meets the objection to his notions of “sinful flesh,” which, I have already intimated, is founded upon the perfect purity of Christ.

“If it should occur here, in the form of an objection to the view just presented, that Jesus Christ was per-

\* See Greek and English Lexicon.

† See the Hebrew and Greek texts, and all the approved Hebrew and Greek Lexicons.



fectly holy, while he tabernacled in a human body, it is only necessary to say, that the cases are not parallel; because his body was not polluted by sin. It was not *sinful* flesh, but only '*the likeness* of sinful flesh,' in which he was made. God did not suffer his 'Holy One to see corruption.' He assumed our nature, as far as this could be done, 'without sin;' and, that a difference might exist between his nature and ours, in respect to sin, he was not the offspring of man by ordinary generation. The circumstances attending his introduction into the world were peculiar. He came on a special visitation of grace and good-will to men; and he came in such a way, as to bear their griefs and carry their sorrows, without participating, personally, in any of their corruptions, either in body or mind."\*

I admit there is not a perfect parallel between Christ and the holiest man that ever lived. Nor is this at all necessary to the argument. All that is necessary is to show that Christ was man—that he possessed a material, mortal, ταπεινωσις, *vile*, body, and *was yet without sin*. But the learned doctor says, "It was not *sinful* flesh, but only '*the likeness* of sinful flesh,' in which he was made." There is something a little too fanciful in this exposition, and I am not at all certain I understand it. I suppose Dr. S. does not intend, with certain ancient heretics, to deny that Christ had a proper human body: and yet I scarcely know what else he can mean. I can scarcely conceive that he has such an idea of the *sinfulness* of human flesh as would make sin an adjunct of the material part of man in the abstract, or in the concrete. By "*sinful flesh*" I understand human flesh, associated as it is with a fallen spiritual nature; and by God's sending his Son "in the

\* Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, pp. 91, 92.

likeness of sinful flesh," simply that *he took upon him a proper human body*.

Professor Stuart's note upon this clause is just and rational :—" *God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh*—That is, God, sending his Son, clothed with a body like that of corrupt and sinful men ; that is, with a fleshly or corporeal nature like theirs."\*

But, lest the Andover professor should be a little too new-fangled to have much weight with Dr. S., I will give him authority that he will respect. The note of the Westminster divines upon this passage is as follows :—" '*In the likeness of sinful flesh*'—Gr., *flesh of sin*. Christ took our nature upon him with all our natural affections ; yet without sin : and therefore the apostle here saith, God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, not in the likeness of flesh, as if he had not taken true flesh upon him ; but in the similitude of *sinful flesh*."†

Dr. S. says truly that the body of Christ "was not polluted by sin." But was it not truly a mortal, corruptible body ? God not suffering "his Holy One to see corruption" is no proof to the contrary of this ; but does rather imply it. For the resurrection and immortality of Christ's body is here ascribed to an extraordinary effort of divine power.

What, then, is the result of this investigation ? Has any evidence been adduced that sin is so connected with our physical constitution, that we cannot get rid of it but by the aid of death ? Is there any proof that sin is in any other way connected with the body than as the body is the instrument of the soul ? Is the weakness and degradation of the body through sin so united

\* Commentary on the place.

† Annotations on the place.

or identified with its constituent elements that the body must be dissolved by death and resumed in the resurrection, before the soul can be entirely sanctified? Let those who can take the affirmative of these questions go on and swallow without hesitation all the dogmas of Romanism. The theory is wholly unsupported either by Scripture, reason, or common sense.

I am aware that a portion of those who oppose the doctrine of Christian perfection do not go the whole length with Dr. Snodgrass, though, from the sanction of the "Presbyterian Board of Publication," I fear his views are but too extensively received. Some there are, however, who will give death no part in the great work of sanctification, who still think that God's appointed time for the entire sanctification of his people is *just before death, or at the moment the soul leaves the body*. This view is not quite so exceptionable as that which I have endeavoured to refute, but is far from being authorized by Scripture. The following refutation of it by the able pen of Mr. Richard Watson, as it is perfectly conclusive, and as it gives us his views upon the general subject, will answer a better purpose than any thing I could say:—

"The attainableness of such a state is not so much a matter of debate among Christians, as the *time* when we are authorized to expect it. For as it is an axiom of Christian doctrine, that 'without holiness no man can see the Lord,' and is equally clear that, if we would 'be found of him in *peace*,' we must be found 'without *spot*, and *blameless*,' and that the church will be presented by Christ to the Father without 'fault,' so it must be concluded, unless, on the one hand, we greatly pervert the sense of these passages, or, on the other, admit the doctrine of purgatory, or some intermediate purifying institution, that the entire sanctification of the

soul, and its complete renewal in holiness, must take place in this world.

“While this is generally acknowledged, however, among spiritual Christians, it has been warmly contended by many, that the final stroke which destroys our natural corruption is only given at death; and that the soul, when separated from the body, and not before, is capable of that immaculate purity which these passages, doubtless, exhibit to our hope.

“If this view can be refuted, then it must follow, unless a purgatory of some description be allowed after death, that the entire sanctification of believers, at any time previous to their dissolution, and in the full sense of these evangelic promises, is attainable.

“To the opinion in question, then, there appear to be the following fatal objections:—

“1. That we nowhere find the promises of entire sanctification restricted to the article of death, either expressly, or in fair inference from any passage of Holy Scripture.

“2. That we nowhere find the circumstance of the soul’s union with the body represented as a necessary obstacle to its entire sanctification.

“The principal passage which has been urged in proof of this from the New Testament, is that part of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, in which St. Paul, speaking in the first person of the bondage of the flesh, has been supposed to describe his state, as a believer in Christ. But whether he speaks of himself, or describes the state of others, in a supposed case, given for the sake of more vivid representation in the first person, which is much more probable, he is clearly speaking of a person who had once sought justification by the works of the law, but who was then convinced, by the force of a spiritual

apprehension, of the extent of the requirements of that law, and by constant failures in his attempts to keep it perfectly, that he was in bondage to his corrupt nature, and could only be delivered from this thralldom by the interposition of another. For, not to urge that his strong expressions of being ‘carnal,’ ‘sold under sin,’ and doing always ‘the things which he would not,’ are utterly inconsistent with that moral state of believers in Christ which he describes in the next chapter; and, especially, that he there declares that such as are in Christ Jesus ‘walk *not* after the flesh, but after the Spirit;’ the seventh chapter itself contains decisive evidence against the inference which the advocates of the necessary continuance of sin till death have drawn from it. The apostle declares the person whose case he describes, to be under the *law*, and not in a state of deliverance by Christ; and then he represents him, not only as despairing of self-deliverance, and as praying for the interposition of a sufficiently powerful deliverer, but as thanking God that the very deliverance for which he groans is appointed to be administered to him by Jesus Christ. ‘Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.’

“This is also so fully confirmed by what the apostle had said in the preceding chapter, where he unquestionably describes the moral state of true believers, that nothing is more surprising than that so perverted a comment upon the seventh chapter as that to which we have adverted should have been adopted or persevered in. ‘What shall we say, then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we, who are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his



death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that OUR OLD MAN IS CRUCIFIED WITH HIM, THAT THE BODY OF SIN MIGHT BE DESTROYED, that henceforth we should not serve sin; for he that is dead IS FREED FROM SIN.' So clearly does the apostle show, that he who is BOUND to the 'body of death,' as mentioned in the seventh chapter, is not in the state of a believer; and that he who has a true faith in Christ, 'IS FREED from sin.'

"It is somewhat singular that the divines of the Calvinistic school should be almost uniformly the zealous advocates of the doctrine of the continuance of indwelling sin till death; but it is but justice to say, that several of them have as zealously denied that the apostle, in the seventh chapter of the Romans, describes the state of one who is justified by faith in Christ, and very properly consider the case there spoken of as that of one struggling in LEGAL bondage, and brought to that point of self-despair, and of conviction of sin and helplessness, which must always precede an entire trust in the merits of Christ's death, and the power of his salvation.

"3. The doctrine before us is disproved by those passages of Scripture which connect our entire sanctification with subsequent habits and acts, to be exhibited in the conduct of believers *before death*. So in the quotation from Romans vi, just given,—'Knowing this, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that *henceforth* we should not serve sin.' So the exhortation in 2 Cor. vii, 1, also given above, refers to the present life, and not to the future hour of our dissolution; and in

1 Thess. v, 23, the apostle first prays for the entire sanctification of the Thessalonians, and then for their *preservation* in that hallowed state, ‘unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.’

“ 4. It is disproved, also, by all those passages which require us to bring forth those graces and virtues which are usually called the fruits of the Spirit. That these are to be produced during our life, and to be displayed in our spirit and conduct, cannot be doubted; and we may then ask whether they are required of us in perfection and maturity? If so, in this degree of maturity and perfection, they necessarily suppose the entire sanctification of the soul from the opposite and antagonist evils. Meekness, in its perfection, supposes the extinction of all sinful anger: perfect love to God supposes that no affection remains contrary to it; and so of every other perfect internal virtue. The inquiry, then, is reduced to this, whether these graces, in such perfection as to exclude the opposite corruptions of the heart, are of possible attainment? If they are not, then we cannot love God with our whole hearts; then we must be sometimes sinfully angry: and how, in that case, are we to interpret that *perfectness* in these graces which God hath required of us, and promised to us, in the gospel? For if the *perfection* meant (and let it be observed that this is a *Scriptural* term, and must mean something) be so comparative as that we may be sometimes sinfully angry, and may sometimes divide our hearts between God and the creature, we may apply the same comparative sense of the term to good words and to good works, as well as to good affections. Thus, when the apostle prays for the Hebrews, ‘Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you *perfect*

in every *good work*, to do his will,' we must understand this perfection of evangelical good works so that it shall sometimes give place to opposite evil works, just as good affections must necessarily sometimes give place to the opposite bad affections. This view can scarcely be soberly entertained by any enlightened Christian; and it must, therefore, be concluded that the standard of our attainable Christian perfection, as to the affections, is a love of God so perfect as to 'rule the heart, and exclude all rivalry, and a meekness so perfect as to cast out all sinful anger, and prevent its return;' and that as to good works, the rule is, that we shall be so 'perfect in every good work' as to 'do the will of God' habitually, fully, and constantly. If we fix the standard lower, we let in a license totally inconsistent with that Christian purity which is allowed by all to be attainable; and we make every man himself his own interpreter of that *comparative* perfection which is often contended for as that only which is attainable.

"Some, it is true, admit the extent of the promises and the requirements of the gospel as we have stated them; but they contend that this is the mark at which we are to *aim*, the standard toward which we are to aspire, though neither is attainable fully till death. But this view cannot be true as applied to *sanctification*, or deliverance from all inward and outward sin. That the *degree* of every virtue implanted by grace is not limited, but advances and grows in the living Christian throughout life, may be granted; and through eternity, also: but to say that these virtues are not attainable, through the work of the Spirit, in that degree which shall destroy all opposite vice, is to say that God, under the gospel, requires us to be what we cannot be, either through want of efficacy in his grace, or from some defect in its administration; neither of which has any

countenance from Scripture, nor is at all consistent with the terms in which the promises and exhortations of the gospel are expressed. It is also contradicted by our own consciousness, which charges our criminal neglects and failures upon ourselves, and not upon the grace of God, as though it were insufficient. Either the consciences of good men have in all ages been delusive and over-scrupulous, or this doctrine of the necessary, though occasional, dominion of sin over us is false.

“5. The doctrine of the necessary indwelling of sin in the soul till death, involves other antisciptural consequences. It supposes that the seat of sin is in the flesh, and thus harmonizes with the pagan philosophy, which attributed all evil to matter. The doctrine of the Bible, on the contrary, is, that the seat of sin is in the soul; and it makes it one of the proofs of the fall and corruption of our spiritual nature, that we are in bondage to the appetites and motions of the flesh. Nor does the theory which places the necessity of sinning in the connection of the soul with the body, account for the whole moral case of man. There are sins, as pride, covetousness, malice, and others, which are wholly spiritual; and yet no exception is made in this doctrine of the necessary continuance of sin till death as to them. There is, surely, no need to wait for the separation of the soul from the body in order to be saved from evils which are the sole offspring of the spirit; and yet these are made as inevitable as the sins which more immediately connect themselves with the excitements of the animal nature.

“This doctrine supposes, too, that the flesh must necessarily not only lust against the Spirit, but in no small degree, and on many occasions, be the conqueror: whereas, we are commanded to ‘*mortify* the deeds of

the body;' to '*crucify*,' that is, to put to death, 'the flesh;' '*to put off* the old man,' which, in its full meaning, must import separation from sin in fact, as well as the renunciation of it in will; and '*to put on* the new man.' Finally, the apostle expressly states, that though the flesh stands victoriously opposed to *legal* sanctification, it is not insuperable by evangelical holiness:— 'For what the *law* could not do, in that it was weak *through the flesh*, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be *fulfilled* in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,' Rom. viii, 3, 4. So inconsistent with the declarations and promises of the gospel is the notion that, so long as we are in the body, 'the flesh' must of necessity have at least the occasional dominion.

"We conclude, therefore, as to the *time* of our complete sanctification, or, to use the phrase of the apostle Paul, 'the destruction of the body of sin,' that it can neither be referred to the hour of death, nor placed subsequently to this present life. The attainment of perfect freedom from sin is one to which believers are called during the present life, and is necessary to that completeness of 'holiness,' and of those active and passive graces of Christianity, by which they are called to glorify God in this world, and to edify mankind."\*

Before leaving the consideration of mistaken views as to the *time when* the work of entire sanctification may be expected, I must notice a theory differing materially from the one already noticed, and yet it may well be doubted whether it is not of equally injurious tendency.

The view to which I refer is, that the soul is entirely sanctified when it is justified—that regeneration, which

\* Institutes, part ii, chap. 39.



takes place at the time of justification, is identical with entire sanctification.

1. I urge that this view is clearly in opposition to the views of our standard writers. The doctrines of Mr. Wesley's sermon on "Sin in Believers," already noticed, are wholly inconsistent with the idea of entire sanctification. The same view is clearly expressed in the following questions and answers:—"When does inward sanctification begin? In the moment a man is justified. (Yet sin remains in him, yea, the seed of all sin, till he is sanctified throughout.) From that time a believer gradually dies to sin, and grows in grace."\*

"Q. 22. By what 'fruit of the Spirit' may we 'know that we are of God,' even in the highest sense?

"A. By love, joy, peace, always abiding; by invariable long-suffering, patience, resignation; by gentleness, triumphing over all provocation; by goodness, mildness, sweetness, tenderness of spirit; by fidelity, simplicity, godly sincerity; by meekness, calmness, evenness of spirit: by temperance, not only in food and sleep, but in all things natural and spiritual.

"Q. 23. But what great matter is there in this? Have we not all this when we are justified?

"A. What, total resignation to the will of God, without any mixture of self-will? gentleness, without any touch of anger, even the moment we are provoked? love to God, without the least love to the creature, but in and for God, excluding all pride? love to man, excluding all envy, all jealousy, and rash judging? meekness, keeping the whole soul inviolably calm? and temperance in all things? Deny that any ever came up to this, if you please; but do not say all who are justified do.

\* Plain Account, pp. 48, 49.

“Q. 24. But some who are newly justified do. What then will you say to these?

“A. If they really do, I will say they are sanctified; saved from sin in that moment; and that they never need lose what God has given, or feel sin any more.

“But certainly this is an exempt case. It is otherwise with the generality of those that are justified: they feel in themselves more or less pride, anger, self-will, a heart bent to backsliding. And, till they have gradually mortified these, they are not fully renewed in love.”\*

Mr. Fletcher gives us his views upon this point with some reasons for them, as follows:—

“We do not deny that the remains of the carnal mind still cleave to imperfect Christians; and that when the expression ‘carnal’ is softened and qualified, it may, in a low sense, be applied to such professors as those Corinthians were to whom St. Paul said, ‘I could not speak to you as to spiritual.’ But could not the apostle be yet ‘spoken to as a spiritual man? And does he not allow, that, even in the corrupted churches of Corinth and Galatia, there were some truly spiritual men—some adult, perfect Christians? See 1 Cor. xiv, 37, and Gal. vi, 1.”†

Again,—

“The same Spirit of faith which initially purifies our hearts, when we cordially believe the pardoning love of God, completely cleanses them, when we fully believe his sanctifying love.”‡

In addition to these quotations, which certainly suppose sanctification subsequent to, and not always immediately connected with, justification, we may refer to this author’s “Address to Imperfect Believers,” the whole of which proceeds upon the supposition that

\* Plain Account, pp. 124, 125. † Last Check, Sec. 8. ‡ Ib. Sec. 19.

there is a class of "believers," and, of course, persons who are justified, who are not yet fully sanctified. Upon the principle under consideration, that masterly effort, and, if we rightly judge, the best part of the treatise, is grossly absurd : for it is a strong effort to urge on "believers" to an attainment which they have already reached, and which is a necessary concomitant of justifying faith.

Mr. Watson takes the Wesleyan position, and sustains it by Scripture.

"That a distinction exists between a regenerate state and a state of entire and perfect holiness will be generally allowed. Regeneration, we have seen, is concomitant with justification ; but the apostles, in addressing the body of believers in the churches to whom they wrote their epistles, set before them, both in the prayers they offer in their behalf, and in the exhortations they administer, a still higher degree of deliverance from sin, as well as a higher growth in Christian virtues. Two passages only need be quoted to prove this :—1 Thess. v, 23, 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 2 Cor. vii, 1, 'Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' In both these passages deliverance from sin is the subject spoken of ; and the prayer in one instance, and the exhortation in the other, go to the extent of the entire sanctification of 'the soul' and 'spirit,' as well as of the 'flesh' or 'body,' from all sin ; by which can only be meant our complete deliverance from all spiritual pollution, all inward depravation of the heart, as well as that which, expressing itself outwardly by the in-

dulgence of the senses, is called 'filthiness of the flesh.' ”\*

2. To the doctrine that entire sanctification is a distinct work, and subsequent to justification, we, as ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, have fully set our seal on our full induction into the ministerial office. In the Discipline, chap. i, sec. 9, the fourth question and the answer to it are as follows: "What method do we use in receiving a preacher at the conference? After solemn fasting and prayer, every person proposed shall then be asked, before the conference, the following questions, (with any others which may be thought necessary,) viz.:—Have you faith in Christ? Are you going on to perfection? Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life? Are you groaning after it?" These questions we have answered in the affirmative. The point that I conceive plainly couched in this passage, and which I wish here particularly noticed is, that it is supposed that "faith in Christ," that is, *justifying faith*, does not necessarily imply "perfect love." The candidate must have this "faith," and must, at least, be *expecting* to be made "perfect in love," and be "groaning after it."

3. The position that entire sanctification always accompanies justification, is not in accordance with fact and experience.

Who are those among us who are concerned for this blessing of perfect love? Are they those who have never been justified? or those who, having been justified, have fallen from that state? Not these, surely; but those who retain their justification, and do honour to the Christian name; those who are most active and useful in the church. These are the persons who are

\* Institutes, part ii, chap. 29.

most athirst for the blessing of a clean heart and entire consecration to God.

Again. Is it not presuming too far to suppose that those who have professed this high and holy state were mistaken—that they do not understand the character of their own experience? To say nothing of those among ourselves who have made professions of this kind, and have given the most indubitable proofs of their sincerity, let us refer to Messrs. Fletcher, Bramwell, Carvosso; Mrs. Rogers, Mrs. Fletcher, Lady Maxwell, and a host of others who have died in the faith. All these explicitly declare that they received a distinct witness of this *second blessing*; that while in a justified state they felt the workings of inward corruption: they sought by prayer and faith for deliverance, and obtained a clear and satisfactory evidence of entire sanctification; so that they “reckoned themselves dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ.” They now had the witness of perfect love, distinct from the witness of pardon which was communicated on their justification. Now shall we say they mistook the operations of their own minds? This we might do if there were any thing in their experience contrary to the word of God; or if they had in other instances exhibited signs of mental aberration or incorrigible enthusiasm, we might be justified in supposing that they were self-deceived. But of the persons above named we can form no such conclusion. In all they say on other points, reason and the true spirit of the gospel are predominant. Why should we conclude them entirely beside themselves here? Indeed, if the gospel remains the same that it was in the days of John and Paul, we have good reason to conclude them in their sober senses even in their highest professions.



But there are multitudes in all the Christian churches who exhibit the fruits, and have the inward testimony of a state of justification, but who do not enjoy the great blessing of perfect love. What shall we say concerning these, upon the hypothesis here opposed? We must, as far as I can see, come to one of the following conclusions concerning them. Either they were never really justified, or they have lost their entire sanctification without losing their justification, or they have lost both the one and the other, and are, consequently, in a backslidden state.

Can we, consistently with charity, come to the first conclusion, viz., that all those Christians who are conscious of the absence of the entire sanctification, or perfect love, in question, were never really born of the Spirit or justified? Perhaps none would, for a moment, embrace such a conclusion. And will any who hold the identity of the new birth and entire sanctification, fall upon the second supposition, viz., that these persons have lost the blessing of perfect love, and yet retain that of regeneration? This conclusion seems incongruous and even absurd. For if these two things are identical, how can they be separated? If there is any reason which goes to identify regeneration and entire sanctification in their commencement, does not the same reason identify them in their progress? If they are one and the same, how can they be separated under any circumstances, or at any time?

Well, who will embrace the third supposition, viz., that all who were ever justified and do not now enjoy the blessing of entire sanctification, have fallen away from the favour of God, and are not in a state of gracious acceptance? I think few will hazard such a conclusion as this. The result, then, to which I come is, that the theory which asserts that entire sanctification

invariably takes place when justification and regeneration take place is inconsistent with fact and experience.

4. I next urge that the view here opposed is inconsistent with the language of Scripture upon the subject.

In the quotation from Mr. Fletcher, we have a reference to the defective churches of Corinth and Galatia—the fact, that they were not in a state of entire sanctification, being in a sense “carnal,” and yet, that they were in a sense “spiritual,” urged in proof of the error of the doctrine here opposed. A stronger proof is that of Mr. Watson, deduced from 1 Thess. v, 23 and 2 Cor. vii, 1, and which I need not here repeat. I wish, however, these Scripture proofs to be taken into the account in connection with this argument.

To these Scripture arguments I will add several others. In John, chap. xvii, we have our Saviour’s prayer to the Father, a portion of which concerns his disciples. These, he says, “are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” And again claims them as *his*—“I pray,” says he, “for those thou hast given me.” And for them he offers up this prayer: “Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth,” ver. 17. Now though the language of Christ, in this case, implies, that those for whom he prays are his by adoption, yet the prayer for their *sanctification* implies that this great work had not been completed in them.

Again, (in Heb. vi, 1,) the Hebrew Christians, who must certainly be considered to be in a gracious state, are exhorted to “go on to perfection,” which would scarcely be expected if they had already attained perfection.

Finally, in 1 John i, 7 we read, “If we walk in the light as he is in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Observe, 1. In this passage we are supposed to be “in the light,” and,

2. That by *walking* in this "light" we may be *cleansed from all sin*. To suppose that the moment we enter the *light* we are already *cleansed from all sin*, would be to make the language of this passage absurd. We are nowhere told that we must "walk in the light as he is in the light" in order to obtain justification, nor would it be consistent to urge us to do any thing in order to the attainment of what we already most assuredly have in possession.

Here I must conclude this lecture with a single reflection. It is lamentable that controversy must be employed in the discussion of the clearest and most vital truths of our holy religion. When we feel disposed to be hortatory, we are met with objections and difficulties ; and instead of pressing our theme we must go into the drudgery of proving it, or of shaking off from it some false gloss which, like an incubus, paralyzes all the sensibilities, and effectually bars the minds of many against its reception. This state of facts I have regretted in no case more deeply than in relation to the subject of these lectures. If there is one doctrine of more interest to Christians than another, the doctrine of entire sanctification should have the pre-eminence in their consideration. But the difficulty with which the subject has been encompassed by the speculations of men, who have treated it with reference to a theory, go far toward rendering it, at least to common minds, one of the inexplicable mysteries, and so of destroying its legitimate effects. The most prominent of these difficulties I have attempted in these lectures to obviate, with what success others must judge. I hope I have not "darkened counsel by words without knowledge," but, on the other hand, have given some relief to the candid, anxious inquirer after "the old paths."

## LECTURE XV.

## DIRECT SCRIPTURE PROOFS.

“This is the will of God, even your sanctification,” 1 Thess. iv, 3.

THE purpose of the present lecture shall be to present the direct Scripture evidence of the attainableness of a state of entire sanctification in this life.

But before I proceed to state the proofs, I wish to direct attention to the results at which I have arrived in the preceding lectures. A review of these will show that I now approach the direct Scripture proof of the main question with a strong probability in its favour. This probability, it will be seen, has accumulated with every successive step in the progress of the argument.

It was first shown that persons in a gracious state were urged to proceed to higher attainments. In the next place, these attainments, as clearly defined in the New Testament, were found to imply a state of holiness above the common grade—implying, *a death to sin and a life to righteousness*: then it was shown that many learned and pious divines agree in the attainableness of a state of Christian perfection. After this a brief review of the history of the controversy was attempted; in which it was found that the Wesleyan system of evangelical perfection had not been embraced by the ancient or modern heretics, and, of course, had never been condemned by the orthodox; and when this system was brought into question, divines equally zealous for the doctrines of original sin, human impotency, the influences of the Spirit, the holiness of the law, the change of the covenants—that the covenant of grace supersedes that of works, as the ground of

human acceptance—and for many other points of Christian doctrine, were divided upon this question; one party asserting, and the other denying, the attainableness of such a state of perfection: then the objections against the doctrine were duly weighed and found untenable. And in the last lecture several theories upon the subject of the time when we are authorized to expect entire sanctification were examined, and the position taken by our opponents, that sin necessarily continues in the soul until the death of the body, was shown to be unsupported either by Scripture or sound philosophy.

If then I have succeeded in clearing the ground as far as I have proceeded in the argument; if the great elements of the doctrine are settled in the word of God, and no valid objection stands against it; and if the opposite theory is grossly absurd and anti-scriptural, is it not highly probable that our theory is the true one? I say, then, that I approach the direct Scripture proof with a very strong probability in my favour. Indeed, it is scarcely possible that a theory against which there is no Scripture testimony, or solid objection founded in the nature of things, or God's established plan of action, and in favour of which there are so many probabilities, should be false; and it is not at all possible that it should be a dangerous error. So that if we had not a single explicit proof to allege from the Bible, our doctrine at least might be presumed to be safe, and not liable to the charge of heresy.

But we have ample Scripture testimony which we suppose directly in point. This I shall now proceed to adduce.

1. I first urge, that God commands us to be perfect. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," Matt. v, 48. Again, "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect." "Thou shalt love



the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," Mark xii, 30. "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii, 1.

I need add no further instances of this class, because if the argument which I base upon these is valid, the evidence they afford is perfectly conclusive, but if unsound, a multitude of passages of the same class would give it no additional strength.

But before I proceed further I must examine the position taken upon all such passages as contain the words perfection, blameless, entire, &c. When we urge these terms, either found in precepts or examples, our opponents claim the right so to qualify them, as to make them mean little or nothing.

Dr. Snodgrass disposes of these terms thus:—"It is not denied, that there are *words* and *phrases* employed in Scripture, which, if understood in the greatest latitude of meaning of which they are susceptible, would imply that not a few both of the Old and New Testament saints were without sin. These are such as the words 'perfect,' 'entire,' 'complete,' 'blameless.' It is said of Noah, Job, and others, that they were *perfect*—of all Christians, that they are *complete*—of Zachariah and Elisabeth, that they walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord *blameless*. But, it is granted on all hands, that these and other terms of similar import are often used in a qualified and restricted sense; and therefore no decisive proof can be drawn from their appearance in this connection."\*

Dr. Woods takes the same ground. After consider-

\* Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, pp. 33, 34.

ing several of the passages alleged in this argument, he comes to this result:—"As a limited sense clearly belongs to some of the passages which seem, at first view, to favour the doctrine of 'perfection,' it is quite *possible* it may belong to *others*, and it would be going too fast and too far, to decide at once, that *any* of that class of texts must be taken in the highest and most absolute sense."\*

Now, if these learned divines have taken legitimate ground upon the passages in question, we must admit that they do not certainly prove our theory of perfection. But they proceed upon a false principle of interpretation. Their ground is this:—That as the terms perfection, blameless, &c., are *often* used in a qualified sense, therefore they are not decisive—we are not permitted to give them their full literal sense when employed in connection with Christian experience and character, as they are often used in a qualified sense in other connections. And I will now show that the principle of exegesis here assumed is contrary to all good authority, is rejected by themselves in the consideration of other topics, and, if generally adopted, would lead to the most dangerous results.

The sound principle of exegesis here violated, and which I say is sustained by the best authority, is, that *language is always to be understood in its literal and natural sense, unless there is something in the nature of the subject to which it is applied which requires the restricted meaning*. Hooker says:—"I hold it for a most infallible rule in expositions of sacred Scripture, that when a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst. There is nothing more dangerous than this licentious and deluding art, which changeth the meaning of words, as

\* Examination of the Doctrine of Perfection, pp. 69, 70.

alchemy doth or would do the substance of metals, maketh of any thing what it listeth, and bringeth in the end all truth to nothing.”—*Ecclesiastical Polity*, book v, chap. 59.

If it should be urged that the case in question is one of the cases of exception provided for by the rule, it is replied, that this is *begging the whole question*. We do not admit this. And our opponents have no right to assume it without proof.

But do our opponents admit the principle which they here adopt in other cases? A case precisely in point is the mode of argument pursued by Universalists. These learned doctors would bring against them all those passages which set forth the duration of future punishment by the terms *eternal*, *everlasting*, &c. But the Universalist objects: “These and other terms of similar import are often used in a qualified and restricted sense; and therefore no decisive proof can be drawn from their appearance in this connection.” Now how would these gentlemen proceed in this case? Would they admit the Universalist law of exegesis? or would they rather say, the literal sense has the prior claim, and unless you can show, without begging the whole question at issue, that there is something in the nature of the case that requires the restricted sense to be given these terms in the cases in question, you are bound by all just laws of interpretation, to give them their literal sense. Now shall we permit them, in cases precisely similar, to take opposite positions? Can they honourably, and above board, adopt a principle of exegesis in one case, and, in another, precisely similar, wholly abandon it, because, forsooth, it would lead them to a result which they would fain avoid?

I now need not, surely, spend much time in showing that the principle of interpretation adopted by these

learned doctors would, if followed out, lead to disastrous results. It has already been seen what use Universalists make of it. And but allow men to qualify and restrict the language of Scripture as they please, whenever it comes in the way of their preconceived notions, and what error could not be sustained by the Bible? Where should we find our moorings? The free circulation of the Scriptures would, as Romanists say, be productive of a multitude of heresies.

We are then at full liberty to reject as illegitimate and ruinous the position taken by our opponents in relation to the terms perfection, blameless, &c., and to give them their natural meaning, only limiting them by the nature of the case, as it is revealed, and by explicit passages upon the same subject. Having cleared the way, then, I proceed to my argument.

We are here commanded to "be perfect," to "perfect holiness," and, which amounts to the same thing, to "love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength." All, then, that is necessary to complete the argument is, to prove (if it need proof) that all the requirements of the gospel are *practicable*. I know Augustine says:—"God commands us to do some things that we are not able to do, that we may know what we ought to crave of him." But whoever has a relish for such absurd paradoxes, I have not. I do not believe there *can* be a reason why God should require impossibilities. The supposition is a flat denial of his justice as well as of his goodness. All our feelings and notions of natural justice rise up against it, and the Bible explicitly declares that God's *ways* are *just* and *equal*. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" is a question once asked by "the father of the faithful," and it is one which is very strongly suggested by assertions or implications, that God may, in

the affairs of his government, depart from those established principles of justice which he has implanted deep in the human conscience, and which everywhere characterize his own acts.

I rather conclude with Mr. Wesley that all the requirements of the gospel may be regarded as so many promises. For certainly God would not explicitly require any thing that he would not assist us to perform. I regard this position as wholly unassailable. It is one of those evangelical axioms which scarcely need proof. And, indeed, it is seldom directly denied, though it is often indirectly, and by logical consequence, called in question. But in all such cases the individual finds it convenient to cover himself with a cloud of metaphysical distinctions and indefinable subtleties. In such cases sober argument is useless. When men will mystify the plainest truths, and involve themselves in the grossest absurdities for the sake of a favourite point, we may pity them, but to render them effective aid is generally out of the question.

Dr. Snodgrass, instead of coming out directly against the principle of this argument, contents himself with running it into a supposed absurdity. The supposed absurdity is, however, a creature of his own imagination, and his effort proves, though he chooses not explicitly to say, that he has no difficulty in supposing *God may require impossibilities!*

2. In the second place, I prove that entire sanctification in the present life is attainable from the provisions of the gospel.

And, *first*, Christ has undertaken the work. The Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again,



who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us," Rom. viii, 34. "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again," 2 Cor. v, 15. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness : by whose stripes ye were healed," 1 Pet. ii, 24.

*Secondly.* The Holy Spirit is poured out to effect it. "Being sanctified by the Holy Ghost," Rom. xv, 16.

*Thirdly.* The word is sent abroad as the grand instrument for its accomplishment: "Sanctify them through thy truth : thy word is truth," John xvii, 17. "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom ; that we may present every man *perfect* in Christ Jesus," Col. i, 28.

Now our argument is this, that all these provisions are made and put in operation without any limitations or restrictions as to the time in which the work should be accomplished, but the same language is held in relation to them as means of entire sanctification, that is employed in relation to justification, which it is acknowledged on all hands must take place in this life, and may be had at any time when the conditions are performed. Therefore I conclude, that provision is made for the entire sanctification of believers in this life. But here we meet a formidable objection to our conclusion. "The means may exist, and be known, without being applied in such a way as to secure the end ; they are nothing in themselves, and become effectual, only as they are overruled and blessed. And again, if the provision be supposed to refer to the *efficient Agent* in sanctification, then we say, that, while the provision of the gospel is abundant—while the Holy Spirit, who is sent into the world for this purpose,

is fully *able* to accomplish the work—it is no legitimate inference from this to affirm, that he will bring it to perfection during the present life. Whether he will or not, must depend altogether upon himself.”\*

And supposing we admit this reasoning correct, what then? Still our conclusion, that entire sanctification is attainable, remains good and valid so long as we are permitted to assume that God would not solemnly announce a provision as made that he did not intend to carry into immediate effect, and we hardly need ask any man’s good leave to assume this. To illustrate the subject: suppose the streets of New-York thronged with a multitude of miserable paupers, who are perishing for the want of food and clothing; and the city authorities should undertake to make *provisions* for their relief. And immediately, upon the completion of the arrangements, heralds should be sent in all directions to proclaim that the *provisions were now made*, fully to meet every case. The heralds cry aloud, “The corporation store is now open, and the provisions ample; whosoever will, let him come, and partake freely.” What would be the inference? And suppose when the multitude begins to press to the place of supplies, they should find the doors shut and barred. And, lo! now they are told by one fully inducted into the secrets of the Common Council, The proclamation was correct enough, to be sure, but whoever supposed an announcement that provision is made for the supply of your necessities is the same as an assurance that your wants will be *immediately* supplied upon your making application? Would the poor perishing creatures have no reason to complain of deception and imposition? Not at all, says Dr. Snodgrass, for the provisions will be made available in due time. On some future occasion,

\* Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, pp. 61, 62.

determined upon in secret council, just in time to save the people from finally perishing, the stores will be opened, and every want fully supplied. But, sir, where is the authority for this limitation? Is there any thing of this kind in the proclamation? Were not the people invited to come *now*? This explanation mends not the matter at all. Under such circumstances a provision could not be announced, and left without any explanations with regard to a secret *determination* to delay the application of it in *good faith*, if such were the plan. The people should be told at the commencement not to expect their supplies *until a certain day*, when the stores would be open.

Dr. Woods has another way of disposing of the argument from the provisions of the gospel. It is as follows:—"Mr. Mahan thinks that his peculiar doctrine certainly follows from the fact, that provision is made for the entire sanctification of believers. This, then, shall be my next point of inquiry. *From the fact that provision is made in the gospel for the complete sanctification of believers, does it follow that they will be completely sanctified in the present life?* Let us dismiss all other points till we have disposed of this. It is a matter of reasoning. And those who are accustomed to reasoning know how important it is to give a fixed attention to the point under consideration, and to be careful not to wander from it."\*

But the good doctor does Mr. Mahan great injustice in this argument. He certainly knew, for he could but know, that Mr. Mahan adduces the provisions of the gospel "for the complete sanctification of believers" to prove, not the *fact* that "they will be completely sanctified in this life," but that "perfection in holiness

\* Examination of the Doctrine of Perfection, p. 22.

is *attainable* in this life.”\* The question of *fact* is not raised by Mr. Mahan at this point at all, and ought not to have been made the question by the doctor in the examination of his argument. Through this whole chapter the venerable author totally misses the question, and perverts, instead of answering, the argument of his opponent. We argue, as does Mr. Mahan, that provision being made for the entire sanctification of believers affords ground to conclude that such a state *is attainable*.

3. I prove the attainableness of entire sanctification in the present life from the promises of the Bible. “And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities,” Psa. cxxx, 8. “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.—I will also save you from all your uncleannesses; and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you,” Ezek. xxxvi, 25, 29. “And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live,” Deut. xxx, 6. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled,” Matt. v, 6. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” 1 John i, 7, 9. “But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him,” 1 John ii, 5.

Dr. Snodgrass concedes that “if there is a passage in the Bible which contains the promise of entire sanc-

\* See Mahan on Christian Perfection, p. 20.

tification in this life, the whole controversy is thereby decided.”\* But he denies that any such promise is made. Upon the passages alleged he takes the following position :—

“ In this view, the promises which they contain are ‘ exceeding great and precious ;’ they secure to every believer, beyond all peradventure or possibility of failure, a perfect deliverance from the existence and pollution of sin. But, as to *the time* at which this deliverance is to be consummated, they contain no specification, and express no opinion. They are just as consistent with the views of those who suppose that sanctification is never entire in the present life, as with the views of those who believe that it is. Nor are there any promises in the Bible, relating to this subject, to which the same remark will not apply. There are many, indeed, which contemplate the perfect holiness of believers, but it is of believers *in common*, and without any limitation to this world as the time and place. The work is begun here, and carried on, under different circumstances, as well as with various degrees of rapidity. Ere long it will be completed ; but, that any are to realize this completion, during the present life, is more than any promise of God has authorized us to expect.”†

And Dr. Woods takes the same view of these promises. Thus he proceeds :—“ To me it is manifest, that the above-mentioned promise may be accomplished in *different degrees*. It is accomplished in a lower degree, when God, by his Spirit, brings men to repent, and to render cordial obedience to his law in a *small measure*. It is accomplished in a *higher* degree, when he brings them to render obedience in a *larger measure*. And it is accomplished in the highest degree,

\* Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, p. 55.    † Ibid., pp. 59, 60.



or perfectly, when he brings them to render an *unceasing* and *perfect* obedience. And this is only saying, what is true in a thousand cases, that a good work may be done, or a favour conferred, in different degrees, and that its being done in one degree does not necessarily imply that it is done in another and higher degree. It would seem that no one can mistake concerning a matter so plain as this. And yet the conclusiveness of much of Mr. Mahan's reasoning turns upon this one point. Take the promise above recited, that *all shall know God, from the least to the greatest*. I ask Mr. Mahan whether this promise has ever been completely fulfilled, respecting either the children of Israel or any other nation? If he says yes, I ask, when? If he says no, as he doubtless will, then I ask, how, on this principle of interpreting the promises, he can vindicate the faithfulness of God? Will he say, although the promise has never yet been fulfilled, it will be *hereafter*? Then I ask, why the same may not hold in respect to all the texts in which God promises to make his people completely holy? If God may be faithful in respect to the promise that *all shall know him*, because he will fulfil it at a distant, future period, though for thousands of years it has remained unfulfilled, may he not be faithful in respect to his promise that *his people shall be made perfect in holiness*, if he fulfils it to them *a few days hence*—that is, when they are removed to the heavenly state—although it may not be fulfilled during the short period of the present life?"\*

Now the misfortune of all this reasoning is, that it goes upon the assumption that these promises are of the same nature of those which relate to the *final* conversion of the world: this is the question in dispute, and

\* Examination of the Doctrine of Perfection, pp. 31-33.

remains to be proved. I go upon the presumption that all the promises made to believers, without any intimation that their application is not to be made now during the present life, and when there is nothing in the nature of the case to postpone their fulfilment to the future state, are applicable at any time, and may be fulfilled at any moment.

The *onus probandi*, which our opponents would fain throw upon us, here properly devolves on them. It is not for us to prove that any promises made *without qualification* may be fulfilled now or during this life; but it is for them to prove that in the nature of things, or according to the established principles of the divine government, their fulfilment is reserved for the life to come.

Is there any thing unfair in this? Suppose some one should attempt to sustain the position that men are not justified until after death, and should urge that the promises of justification will not fail if they are fulfilled ultimately; would not our learned doctors require such errorists to prove that the effects of faith in this case are removed to the future state? Or would they take hold of the labouring oar themselves? Do they not presume, in all other cases, that the provisions and promises of the gospel offered to believers, and not necessarily removed to the future state, are applicable now, and are attainable in the present life? Doubtless they do. Only, then, let them be consistent, and they will yield the ground.

This is certainly all the answer that this argument requires in this place, especially as in the preceding lecture I have presented from Mr. Watson an irrefutable argument against this mode of dealing with the promises and provisions of the gospel, in relation to entire sanctification.

4. In the next place, I urge that a state of entire sanctification is made a matter of prayer.

Our Lord, in the form of prayer which he left for the instruction of the church, directs us to say, "Deliver us from evil." This petition is not restricted to physical evil, nor to a portion of moral evil, but is left to apply to sin in general, and of course embraces *all sin*. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be *made perfect* in one," John xvii, 20-23. "I bow my knees unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God," Eph. iii, 14, &c. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God, your whole spirit, soul, and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thess. v, 23. "Always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God," Col. iv, 12.

Now I cannot doubt, (1.) But entire sanctification is embraced in these prayers. Nor, (2.) That any thing that we are authorized to pray for, either by precept or example, is attainable.

In relation to prayers for entire sanctification, Dr. Snodgrass says, "It is admitted, that all such prayers, if offered in sincerity, will be answered. But the question to be determined is, *WHEN* will they be answered?"\* Well, let the doctor *prove*, by the

\* Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, p. 64.

testimony of Scripture, that they are not in any case to be answered *until after death*, and we will then yield up these passages, as giving us no support. Indeed, this will go far toward settling the whole controversy. And this we insist he is bound to do. These prayers are couched in the same language as all the prayers of the Scriptures which were expected to be answered in the present life, and it certainly devolves upon him to show the grounds of the difference which he makes between them. He wholly assumes, without proof, that these prayers are of the class that God “has *begun* to answer, but the set time to answer fully has not yet arrived.”\*

But not feeling quite satisfied with this method of disposing of one of these passages, (1 Thess. v, 23,) the doctor proceeds “to a critical examination of its meaning;” thus:—“It represents him as asking, not only that God would sanctify them wholly, but that their whole soul, body, and spirit might be *preserved blameless* unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not to be doubted, that this language is capable of being so interpreted as to make it express his desire, that they might, in the first place, be *brought into* a state of perfect sanctification, and then *be kept in* that state until the coming of the Saviour to remove them at death.”†

Indeed, sir, “this language” is not only “*capable* of being so interpreted,” but this is its legitimate meaning. And it may be fairly doubted whether any one who had not a theory in his eye, independent of the sense of Scripture, would give the language any other construction.

Our author proceeds:—“But the difficulty attending this interpretation, to the advocate of perfection, is,

\* Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, p. 66.

† Ibid., p. 67.

that, if admitted to be true, it proves too much. In words immediately following the prayer, the apostle adds, 'Faithful is he that calleth you, who also *will* do it.' This was an absolute and unconditional promise, in which the faithfulness of God was pledged, in the most formal and solemn manner, for the bestowment of what the prayer contemplated upon all those on whose behalf it was offered. There could be no failure, in the case of any one of their number whom God had effectually called; so that, if sinless perfection in this world was the thing which the prayer contemplated, it follows that this perfection was attained by *all* the true followers of Christ in Thessalonica,—which is more than the advocates of the doctrine themselves would be willing to admit."\*

We deny that the promise is "absolute and unconditional." Let the eye run over the language which precedes the twenty-third verse, beginning with verse 16. Here we have, "Pray without ceasing—Quench not the Spirit—Hold fast that which is good—Abstain from all appearance of evil." Are here no conditions? The words upon which our author bases his strong conclusion that the promise is "absolute and unconditional," only prove that *God would certainly be faithful on his part*, and this we rejoice to believe as firmly as Dr. Snodgrass can.

But he says, "There could be no failure of any one of their number—so that if sinless perfection in this world was the thing which the prayer contemplated, it follows that this perfection was attained by all," &c. No, sir. It only follows from the language of the passage that entire sanctification was *attainable* "by all the true followers of Christ in Thessalonica." This is all, and thus much is obvious enough.

\* Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, pp. 67, 68.



Dr. Woods takes similar ground upon this point with Dr. Snodgrass, and an answer to one is an answer to both. There is, however, one view of the subject upon which Dr. W. more strongly insists. "Prayer," he says, "for any good plainly implies that the good is not already obtained. For, if obtained, why should it be prayed for?" And hence he concludes, that it would be improper for any person in a state of entire sanctification still to pray for that good. There is no difficulty in this. We hold not to a state of sanctification in this life that admits of no growth, and renders the subject of it impeccable. He may ever pray for more and more of the image of God—of the love of God shed abroad in his heart—of all the graces of the Spirit—and for continued victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil. He may, indeed he is bound to thank God for the degrees of sanctification he has received, but must never forget to ask for more.

5. Lastly. I assert instances of entire sanctification in proof of its attainableness.

If it can be proved from the Scriptures that there have been persons entirely sanctified, or perfectly holy, it will not be doubted but such a state is still attainable. And I shall proceed in this investigation upon the principle that the words perfect, blameless, entire, and the like, are to be understood in their literal sense, unless the nature of the case is such as that a restricted meaning must be supposed. But where efforts have been made to prove that these terms are, in any of the instances cited, necessarily restricted, I shall give all the reasons of our opponents due consideration.

*First.* We may premise, that men of this class are recognised by the sacred writers as living upon earth. The psalmist says, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, (תְּמִימֵי-דֶרֶךְ *perfect of the way*,) who walk in the

law of the Lord," Psa. cxix, 1. Again he says, "He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me," Psa. ci, 6. And Solomon says, "The upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it," Prov. ii, 21. Our Saviour says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," Matt. v, 8. *Professor Robinson* interprets οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, pure in heart; "sincere, upright, void of evil." (See Lexicon.) And *Parkhurst*, "clean, pure, in a spiritual sense, from the pollution and guilt of sin." (See Lexicon.) "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world," 1 John iv, 17.

*Secondly.* There is a class of passages which speak of a state of entire sanctification as appropriate to the present state of being. The psalmist says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," Psa. li, 10; and adds in the thirteenth verse, "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee." From this it seems evident that the psalmist must have thought of living to do good in the world, after he should have "a clean heart and a right spirit."

And the prophet Ezekiel says in God's name, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean," &c.; "And cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them," Ezek. xxxvi, 25-27.

St. Peter represents our election to be "through sanctification of the Spirit *unto obedience*," 1 Pet. i, 2, "εἰς ὑπακοήν; that is, in order that they should obey the gospel."\* In all these cases, and many others which might be quoted, sanctification is represented as a qualification for the great duties which are to be done

\* Dr. Bloomfield. See Greek Testament, with English notes, *in loc.*

in the present world, and, consequently, cannot be understood as only to be attained at death.

*Thirdly.* Particular instances may be alleged of persons who were said to be *perfect, blameless, upright, &c.* Enoch, Elijah, Daniel, and others, are represented, as far as I recollect, as without offence. Of Job, and others, it is said they were *perfect*; and of Zachariah and Elisabeth, that “they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless,” Luke i, 6.

How one of the greatest authorities with our opponents is obliged to shuffle and shift his positions in order to get along with these passages, may be seen in the following specimen from Turretin:—

“If any are said in Scripture to have fulfilled the commandments of God, and to have loved God with the whole heart, and to have been perfect, as is said of Noah, (Gen. vi, 9,) of David, (Psa. cxix, 10,) of Josiah, (2 Kings xxiii, 25,) of Asa, (2 Chron. xv, 17,) of Zacharias and Elisabeth, (Luke i, 6,) and of others, this is to be understood not absolutely and without limitation as a legal perfection<sup>1</sup> of love and obedience, both in degree and extent, as that would be inconsistent with the sins which are attributed to them.<sup>2</sup> But it is to be understood in a limited sense as an evangelical perfection which indicates an obedience sincere and without hypocrisy,<sup>3</sup> or in a comparative sense both in respect to the wicked who are dead in sin, and in respect to those who are less holy.<sup>4</sup> If Zacharias and

<sup>1</sup> We claim not for them, “absolutely and without limitation, a legal perfection.”

<sup>2</sup> Sins are attributed to some of them at a different time from that in which they are pronounced perfect. This is nothing to the case.

<sup>3</sup> Nearly right. *They were not perfect in their holiness.*

<sup>4</sup> Rarely so. God has an invariable standard of holiness.

Elisabeth are said to be righteous *ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ* before God, this indicates, indeed, that their righteousness and piety were not clothed in false and hypocritical colours, such as could stand before men, but true and sincere, and approved themselves even to God.<sup>5</sup> But it cannot be inferred from this that they were absolutely without spot, since, in the same place, mention is made of the unbelief of Zacharias.<sup>6</sup> Nor is more to be understood when they are said to have walked in the commandments of God blameless, since this means only that they lived without blame and reproach in the eyes of men.<sup>7</sup> It is one thing to be absolutely sinless, but another to be blameless.<sup>8</sup> Paul requires in a bishop that he should be irreprehensible, which is the same as to be blameless; not that he should be without sin, which is impossible, but without blame and reproach."

This commentary is a very instructive one. While the ground for which we contend is really all conceded, the learned author, lest he should be found quite wide of the Augustinian theory, turns around, and makes explanations which amount to a flat contradiction of what he had before said.

Much pains is taken by our opponents to show that in several instances the most distinguished of the patriarchs fell into sins. Dr. Pond urges this fact against us thus:—"The imperfections of such men

<sup>5</sup> Mark this!

<sup>6</sup> This "unbelief" occurred after it was said he was "righteous," &c. A righteous man may fall, either partially or wholly.

<sup>7</sup> How is this? Just above our author gives *ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ*, *before God*, its true sense. "Their righteousness and piety," he says, "approved themselves even to God."

<sup>8</sup> A good distinction. In the sense of this learned author we do not hold an "absolutely sinless" state attainable in this life. But we believe a "blameless" state is attainable.

as Abram, and Lot, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and Aaron, and David, and Solomon, and Peter, and Barnabas, are all faithfully recorded by the pen of inspiration. Such men as Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Job, and Daniel, and Paul, and John, and James, we hear confessing, and oft bewailing and lamenting, their sins. In short, we read of no sinlessly perfect man in the Bible, with the single exception of the man Christ Jesus. But if patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles—those holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost—were not perfect, where are we to look for perfection on this side the grave?"\* Perhaps, indeed, nowhere after the good doctor's fashion!

It is easy to deal in wholesale assertions, and to generalize upon any topic; but to go into particulars, and sustain general conclusions by particular facts, is not always so easy a task. It would be hard for our author to sustain a charge of moral delinquency against at least some of the names he has mentioned. And besides, the sins they committed, and confessed, and mourned over, are nothing to the question of the *attainableness* of a state of perfection. If an instance can be found in the Bible of one individual who, at any period of his life, is truly said to be perfect, blameless, upright, free from sin, or entirely sanctified, the point is clearly gained. It proves the attainableness of such a state. The previous sins or subsequent relapses of such make not in the least against our theory, for we believe not, as I have said repeatedly, in a state of perfection which implies impeccability, or certain perseverance in that state to the last.

We doubt not, indeed, but the same grace which could preserve the soul of a Christian unblameable in love for one moment could do the same for an hour, a

\* Biblical Repository, vol. i, pp. 50, 51.



day, a year, and through a long life. But this grace will not be vouchsafed to the unwatchful, or the negligent. A holy man may lose his vigilance, and so leave room for the entrance of temptations, and, through their influence, fall away from God. But would this prove that he was never holy? We think not. I could give illustrations, but they are scarcely necessary.

St. Paul has been adduced as an instance of Christian perfection. But our opponents will not award to the great apostle the purity claimed for him. They allege his own declarations to the contrary. I will now proceed to inquire how far these go to prove that Paul was really an *imperfect* Christian—destitute, at least, of some of the great elements of Christian character which he urges upon others. I will give the argument of Dr. Snodgrass at full length, that it may have its full force.

“In the third chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians, the apostle gives the most extended and minute account of himself, which his writings contain, as to the *progress* which he had made in his Christian course. He introduces himself to the notice of his readers, as having started in a ‘*race*,’ and as pressing on toward the goal, with a view of securing the prize. He supposes the same circumstances to be present which distinguished the natural race, as run at the celebration of the ancient games. He supposes his *course* to be marked out and prescribed in the gospel: he regards Jesus Christ as having ‘apprehended,’ or laid hold on him, to draw him into this course, and to support and urge him forward in the contest: he has his eye fixed on a *mark*, which he calls ‘the mark *for* the prize’—a goal which he must reach before the prize could be awarded: and, in connection with the mark, is the *prize* itself—the crown of life—the incorruptible

crown, which every winner in this race will receive, as the reward of his victory. I need not occupy the time of the reader in showing that 'the mark' for this prize is perfection in holiness; because this is the only mark, or termination of his course, to which the Christian is allowed to have respect. This is the only goal to which he is commanded to run—the only point at which he is permitted to stop—the only line, beyond which there is nothing more to be acquired or done. As a Christian, there is nothing *else* which he is bound to do, than to seek and obtain a state of entire conformity to the image and will of God, both in heart and in life. Having arrived at this state, his work is finished—he can run no further—his obligations are all discharged—he has come up to the mark, and is ready for the prize.”\*

It will be perceived that the whole force of this argument depends upon the construction Dr. S. gives “the mark” at which the apostle was pressing. Now, if he be allowed to assume that this *mark* is that “perfection in holiness” which we contend is attainable in this life, and which we think St. Paul had already attained, he most certainly derives strong support from the passage under consideration. But he has no right to this assumption. Confident as he is that “this is the only goal to which he is commanded to run,” I beg leave to show that there is no evidence of it whatever.

In the first place, there is no conclusive evidence that the *σκοπον*, *mark*, refers to the *goal* at all.

The learned Peirce says:—“‘*κατα σκοπον*, toward the mark’] I have not met with any good authorities to prove that *σκοπος* signifies the same as *τερμα*, a goal; and therefore I choose rather to take it in the sense in which it is commonly read, and so render it

\* Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, pp. 37–39.

according to my aim or design. Nor is it necessary in allegories to be always confined to terms.”\*

And Dr. Clarke renders *κατα σκοπον διωκω*, *I pursue along the line*: and adds this note:—“This is a reference to the *white line* that marked the ground in the stadium, from the *starting* place to the *goal*, on which the runners were obliged to keep their eye fixed; for they who transgressed, or *went beyond* this line, did not *run lawfully*, and were not crowned, even though they got *first* to the goal.”†

The preposition *κατα*, in the common version rendered *toward*, followed by an accusative, as in the text, often signifies *according to*, *conformably to*, *after*, *along*, *all along*. See Matt. ix, 29; xxiii, 3; Luke ii, 20; John viii, 15; Acts v, 15; Rom. xi, 2.‡ So that a literal rendering of *κατα σκοπον διωκω επι το βραβειον*, is, *I follow on toward the prize, along, or conformably to the mark*.

But if it be admitted that by *σκοπον*, *mark*, the apostle means the *goal*, still it is a question what attainments are to be considered as implied in *the goal*. The Westminster divines consider this goal and the prize as identical. Their language is: “‘*The mark*’—The prize of heavenly glory, for which we run in the holy race set before us. 1 Cor. ix, 24, &c.” So far, then, the evidence of the passage in question affords no help to the cause of Dr. Snodgrass. But let us hear him further:—

“Let it now be considered, that, when this memorable passage was written, the apostle had been running the race, which he describes, for a period of something like *thirty* years. He was not far from the point, at

\* Paraphrase and Notes on the place.

† Commentary on the place.

‡ See Robinson's and Parkhurst's Lexicons.

which he afterward said, 'I have *finished* my course.' In about *three* years more, he was to reach the goal, and obtain the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, had promised to give him. And, under these circumstances, what does he say concerning his progress? 'Not as though I had *already attained*, either were *already perfect*; but I *follow after*'—'Brethren, I count not myself *to have apprehended*; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I *press toward* the mark.' As if he had said—'After all the progress I have made in the divine life, there are other and still higher attainments before me—I pretend not to have reached the point at which I am aiming, but only to be *approaching* it—all that I can claim is, that, instead of being satisfied with past efforts, I am intent upon still higher degrees of proficiency and success.' ”\*

It is sufficiently evident that the apostle uses the word perfect here with reference to the crown of martyrdom, or perhaps the resurrection state. (See verses 9–11.) Diodati paraphrases the passage thus: "Let no man believe that I am as a divine man or an angel in the world, and that I am arrived to the end of my race and combats."

Dr. Clarke paraphrases ἤδη τετελειωμαι, *nor am I yet perfect*; "I am not yet crowned in consequence of having suffered martyrdom;" and proceeds: "I am quite satisfied that the apostle here alludes to the Olympic games; and the word τετελειωμαι is the proof; for τελειωθηναι is spoken of those who have completed their race, reached the goal, and are honoured with the prize." This he proves from Philo. Then he shows by examples from Clemens Alexandrinus,

\* Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, pp. 39, 40.

Basil, Œcumenius, and Eusebius, that “*τελειωσις* signified martyrdom.” In conclusion, this learned commentator says:—

“St. Paul, therefore, is not speaking here of any *deficiency* in his own grace or spiritual state; he does not mean by not being yet *perfect*, that he had *a body of sin and death* cleaving to him, and was still polluted with *indwelling sin*, as some have most falsely and dangerously imagined: he speaks of his not having terminated his course by martyrdom, which he knew would, sooner or later, be the case. This he considered as the *τελειωσις*, or *perfection* of his whole career; and was led to view every thing as *imperfect* or unfinished till this had taken place.”

That this passage was not designed to be considered as denying the fact of the perfection of Paul’s Christian character, is plain from what he says in verse 15, “Let us, therefore, as many of us as *be perfect*, be thus minded.” Here he explicitly lays claim to perfection.

St. Augustine gives us a clear and consistent view of the apostle’s use of the word perfection in these two places, thus:—“*Perfecti et non perfecti: perfecti viatores nondum perfecti possessores—Perfect and not perfect: perfect travellers, but not perfect possessors.*”\*

Now what we contend for is, that St. Paul was a *perfect traveller*, and that we all may be in this respect like him. A *perfect possessor* he was not, but hoped to be such in due time. If all this father says upon perfection were equally luminous, it would probably have been much better for the church.

Another argument to prove that St. Paul was not entirely sanctified, Dr. Snodgrass founds upon Heb. xii, 1. He proceeds thus:—“He [Paul] unites with the Hebrews in saying, ‘Let us lay aside every weight,

\* Sermo. 169.



and *the sin* which doth so easily beset us'—regarding himself, in common with them, as exposed to the influence of besetting sins."\*

This is an argument of no force. We have seen, on a similar occasion, that nothing can be concluded from the use of the pronoun in the first person plural, as this form is commonly used by writers and speakers, when the speaker is not to be understood as included. *Ευπεριστάτον ἁμαρτιαν* is rendered by the best critics, *the well-circumstanced sin*, and may be supposed to refer to the sin to which the Hebrews were most exposed.†

Professor Stuart says :—"The *ἁμαρτία* [*sin*] which most easily beset the Hebrews, was undoubtedly *apostacy*, or defection from their Christian profession; against which the whole epistle is directed. They were under peculiar temptations to this sin, in consequence of the persecutions which they endured, and of their former prejudices in favour of Judaism."‡

And will Dr. Snodgrass say that these Hebrew Christians, and St. Paul with them, *apostatized* daily? It can scarcely be a good cause that depends upon such arguments as this.

Dr. S. proceeds :—"He records, in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, that his tendency to spiritual pride was such, that there was given to him 'a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him.'"§ Dr. S. does not precisely follow the old error, that "the thorn in the flesh" was "concupiscence." But whatever it was, it was designed to cure in Paul a tendency to spiritual pride; or if not

\* Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, p. 40.

† See Clarke's Commentary on the place, and Bretschneider's Lexicon on the word.

‡ Commentary, *in loc.*

§ Scripture Doctrine, p. 40.

exactly to *cure* the evil, as it could not, according to Dr. S., be *wholly* cured until death, yet to punish him for it, or perhaps to *keep it down* a little.

Calvin says upon this passage:—"Here we see a man who had conquered infinite dangers, torments, and other evils; had triumphed over all the enemies of Christ, and had shaken off the fear of death, and renounced the world; yet had not wholly subdued his propensity to *pride*. Nay, he was still engaged in so dreadful a conflict with it, that he could not conquer without himself being beaten and buffeted."

All this is mere assumption. There is no proof in this text, or any other, that Paul "had not wholly subdued his *propensity to pride*." *ἵνα μὴ υπεραιρωμαι*, *Lest I should be exalted above measure*, or, which is more literal, *that I might not be over exalted*, by no means proves that there was still remaining in him a *sinful propensity* to spiritual pride. All that the passage proves, is, that he was *liable* to be too much elevated, and to prevent it, God permitted him to suffer some severe affliction. And who knows that the preventive was not effectual? If Dr. S. does, he will do us a favour by informing us where he received his information.

But let us hear the final accusation brought by the good doctor against the great apostle:—"And who can believe that the sharp contention between him and Barnabas would ever have occurred, if his mind and affections had been in a state of entire sanctification?"\*

As to this, Dr. S. must give me some further light before I can conclude with any safety that this "sharp contention" affords any evidence that St. Paul's "mind and affections" had not "been in a state of entire sanctification." I must know either that Paul had the

\* Scripture Doctrine of Sanctification, p. 41.

wrong side in the quarrel, and that he took this side against good reason, or that he prosecuted the controversy in an unchristian spirit. All *contention* is not *sin*. But I need not enlarge.

Was ever an argument put forth by a Christian divine more slenderly based than the whole of this of Dr. S. to prove that St. Paul had within him unsanctified affections? We are bound to criminate no one without evidence which excludes reasonable doubt, and certainly we should not fasten upon the holy apostle the charge of *sin* without the clearest evidence. And what evidence has been adduced? Passages are brought forward, which, rightly construed, imply no moral defect in the apostle; but which will not admit of the construction put upon them by Dr. S. without violence to all correct rules of interpretation. He often depends upon the mere sound of a word without any reference to the connection, much less to the original. If this is the true mode of discussing any disputed point, I am yet totally uninstructed upon the subject.

It is, however, but fair to state that Dr. S. makes his principal dependance upon the *seventh chapter of Romans*. As I have already fully discussed this chapter, and shown, I trust, that the apostle is not there speaking of his own spiritual state after his conversion, I need say no more upon that subject.

Let us now see if there is not good reason, on the other hand, for believing that Paul was, in the sense in which that character is spoken of in the Scriptures, a *perfect Christian*. We will take the apostle's own representations of himself, for certainly he would make no false professions. Says he,—“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the

flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," Gal. ii, 20. "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe," 1 Thess. ii, 10.

Again, let it be observed, that the apostle sets himself up for an example to others without any reserve. He says :—"Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do : and the God of peace shall be with you," Phil. iv, 9. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample," Phil. iii, 17. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ," 1 Cor. xi, 1.

Now need any further evidence be sought to prove our point? Could the apostle use such language as this if he was capitally deficient in any of the attributes of a perfect Christian? And should any in these times employ the same language in relation to their own religious character and experience, how long would it be ere they would be branded as *perfectionists* by such divines as Drs. Snodgrass and Woods, and declared by the Princeton and Christian Reviews mad enthusiasts?

If then St. Paul has spoken truly concerning himself, he was "crucified with Christ"—lived "holily, and justly, and unblameably"—was "perfect"—and so *followed Christ*, that he could safely admonish all to *follow him* in like manner. This is a clear development of Christian perfection. And I suppose our opponents will not pretend to dispute our conclusion, provided we can maintain our premises. That is, if we can prove that Paul was an instance of the perfection we contend for, we may conclude the state attainable. The conclusion follows so obviously from the premises, that those who oppose the doctrine of Chris-

tian perfection direct their efforts altogether to the refutation of the premises. They undertake to show that St. Paul was not a perfect Christian. With what success they have prosecuted their argument we have seen. I now leave the whole which has been presented, *pro* and *con*, for the candid to examine and decide upon, according to their honest convictions. I have endeavoured to present the whole argument in as clear a light as possible, and hope I have not been guilty of using needless severity in my reflections upon views and arguments which I have judged it necessary to oppose.

Here I leave the controversial part of this discussion, and proceed to the more agreeable work of presenting its experimental and practical parts.

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## LECTURE XVI.

### THE WAY TO THE ATTAINMENT OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

“Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” John xi, 40.

THE subject of Christian perfection is eminently a practical one. It has much to do with the heart and the life. And if I have succeeded in the preceding lectures in obviating the objections which are brought against this doctrine, and in adducing clear and conclusive Scripture proof of its truth, still but a part of my object is accomplished. It still remains more particularly to point out the way and the means of its attainment, and to urge the motives for immediate action. We have done but little when we have merely admitted that Christian perfection is a specula-



tive or doctrinal truth. The next, and by far the most difficult matter, is to feel a *personal interest* in the truth:—to realize *what it is to us*:—to feel that it infinitely concerns *ourselves*. To bring the subject home, then—to labour to produce conviction of the present need we all stand in of *entire sanctification*,—and give appropriate directions to such as feel this conviction, shall be my leading object in the sequel of these lectures.

The purpose of the present lecture shall be to show by what means the grace of entire sanctification may be attained.

I may presume here, *first*, that it has been sufficiently proved that God has provided for the entire sanctification of his people in the present life. And, *secondly*, if so, that we are all personally and individually interested in this provision. If we credit these propositions, and are at the same time conscious that this great work has never been effected in our hearts, can we but feel solemn conviction of our need of it—of the importance of employing such efforts as are the appointed and appropriate means of its attainment? It is for the special benefit of such as have this conviction that I shall now proceed to consider the steps to be taken in order to the attainment of that triumph over sin, and that complete renovation of the soul, implied in Christian perfection.

1. Endeavour to have a definite idea of the thing.

What we see indistinctly we are likely to feel little personal interest in, and to seek waveringly. How much effort is lost for the want of a definite point! This is true in every thing. The worldling fixes his eye upon wealth in general, and the politician upon the triumph of his party, or his own aggrandizement. But those who succeed in either of these departments of

action do not content themselves with the general object. They fix their eye upon some distinct point, as involving the general object, and absolutely essential to it. To this they direct their energies, never losing sight of it for a moment. All they do, directly or indirectly, bears upon this one point. This is one grand secret of success. The man who aims at nothing in particular, however strongly he may feel impressed with the importance of some general object, will never accomplish much. His efforts will be various, hesitating, and often conflicting. He will spend his life in fruitless toil, and live and die under the influence of sad disappointment and chagrin.

What, then, is the definite object, in relation to the subject under consideration, upon which the attention must be fixed? The object is *entire sanctification*. This, as we have seen, consists in *the destruction of sin*, and *the renewing of the soul in the image of God*. Now of this we must have a distinct view. We must be able, in our conceptions, to separate it from every thing not necessarily or immediately connected with it. We must view it as distinct from simple justification and regeneration on the one hand, and from the resurrection and the glorified state upon the other. If we confound entire sanctification with simple regeneration, or if we give them an immediate connection, so that the latter cannot exist without the former, the evidence of regeneration will obviate the necessity, and indeed preclude the possibility, of special efforts in pursuit of this entire sanctification. And on the other hand, it will be impossible for us to make rational efforts to attain now what we in our conceptions connect with the state of the glorified. Let us then fix our eye upon this one point—*the reduction of the whole man to the government and guidance of the divine will*.

But it must not be supposed that the *nature* of this work, its evidences, and the manner of its accomplishment, can be fully understood before it is experienced. Too many are waiting to know *how these things can be*, before they make a serious effort to obtain the blessing. As in the lower stages of Christian experience so in this—we must take many things upon trust; we must “walk by faith, not by sight.” And if we must know the whole way with the clearness of intuition, or of present consciousness, before we will take a step, God will doubtless leave us in our present ignorance with regard to the whole matter. If I wish to visit a distant point concerning which I know nothing excepting from the report of travellers, it would be an extravagant demand for me to require perfect information with regard to all the various appearances of the way, and all the fortunes of the journey, before I would venture to set off. It would be quite enough for me to have satisfactory evidence that the desired point was accessible—that the way was feasible—and that the exercise of my natural powers of body and mind would in due time probably bring me there. With this evidence before me, would it be rational for me to sit still and speculate upon circumstances which I never can fully understand until they come under my own observation? If I should pursue this course, when some important interest would be put in jeopardy by every moment’s delay—if I must reach the place by a certain time, or fail to discharge some great moral or social obligation, or lose some great advantage—if I must execute a commission, or prove my title to an estate, by a time so near that my utmost diligence will be barely sufficient to meet, what folly and recklessness would there be in my wasting time in idle and fruitless speculations! The illustration is of easy ap-

plication. We are told that we must be holy—sanctified wholly—and that there is a way to this desired point which is practicable and safe; that many have travelled it, and have sent back a good report concerning the goodly land and the way to it; and we are assured that, if we take the right course and press on, we shall certainly reach the goal. Now what more need we desire? Does not our asking more, and our delaying under such circumstances, prove but too clearly that we do not sufficiently appreciate the object, or that we have an aversion to the way?

There is a difference, then, between a clear and definite notion of the object in view, and a comprehensive and circumstantial knowledge of the object with all its adjuncts, antecedents, and consequents. The former we must have—the latter we have no reason to expect, and shall seek for in vain.

2. A certain amount of *feeling* upon the subject is necessary.

The excitement that is required is represented by the sensations of *hunger* and *thirst*. Our Saviour says, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Our efforts in the pursuit of an attainable object are in proportion to the strength of our desires. If our desires are strong and constant, we pursue the object with undeviating and constant exertion; but as our feelings fluctuate, our efforts are generally unsteady. Indeed, to be properly awake upon the great subject under consideration is to overcome the greatest part of the difficulties which beset the way. The *anxious* mind is wise to devise, and prompt to execute; but the unfeeling heart sees a thousand difficulties where there is none, and, like a stagnant pool in a dead calm, remains motionless. Apathy is the greatest obstacle to the pursuit of holi-

ness—it is worse, if possible, than a spirit of fixed opposition: for resistance often recoils upon the excited sensibilities, and produces a reaction of the feelings; but insensibility remains the same—holding the soul spell-bound in the adamantine chain of a deceptive security.

And is there not a dreadful amount of apathy in the church upon the subject of entire sanctification? Let us look around upon our own branch of the church, and make observation. We hold to the attainableness of this high state of grace; but, how large a proportion of us are anxiously seeking after it? We believe it, prove it, contend earnestly for it, but, alas! how many of us have attained it, or are restlessly pursuing it? Where is the evidence that we are “hungering and thirsting after righteousness”—that we “expect to be made perfect in love in this life,” and that we are “groaning after it?” This is an absorbing inquiry, and the result to which it brings us is alarming. If God says, “Wo to them that are at ease in Zion!” on what ground do many of us bless ourselves in our imaginary security, or fancy that we are really safe, merely because we have no troublesome anxieties about our own souls, or the souls of others? “Come up, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!”

Some may be disposed to query here, how we are to obtain the tide of feeling which will push itself out into all appropriate exertions in pursuit of the desired good. “With God is the residue of the Spirit,” and the necessary excitement is the product of the Spirit, giving effect to the word. Who, then, it is sometimes objected, is to blame for not having the anxious desire for holiness, which the Spirit of God alone can beget in the soul?

In answer to this, I would say, that I assume here



that God is not backward in doing his part in this matter. A careful analysis of our mental states, and their causes, will show that our want of sensibility is the result of violence done both to former emotions and to the Spirit of God. We do not feel, because we have been unwilling to feel. God has often aroused us from our slumbers, but we have listened to the syren voice of the tempter, and sunk down again into our wonted repose. But admitting all this, say you, how shall I once more feel the inward drawings of the Spirit—the softening influences of truth—the meltings of a broken heart? The answer is ready: Remove from your imagination the phantom that you have already entered the port of peace—let the world dazzle you no more—uncase your soul, and let the light and heat of evangelical truth fall upon its tender fibres—and finally, cry mightily to God for deliverance from the arms of your spiritual Delilah before you go bound hand and foot into the hands of the Philistines, to grind at their mill, and to be to them an object of derision. Until you shall have done at least as much as this, it is vain, and worse than vain, to ask why it is that God has left you in this state of apathy and insensibility. The reason is plain:—you have invited counter-excitements—you have grieved the Holy Spirit—you have armed yourselves against his influences. Where is the mystery, then, in your present spiritual condition—in your state of insensibility and apparent incapability of being properly stimulated by the great motives of the gospel? But remove the cause, and in the mercy of God the effect will cease. God yet waits to be gracious—his hand is stretched out still—and he is as ready as ever to soften, draw, and mould, the submissive and yielding heart. I must, however, hasten to another particular.

### 3. We must exercise feelings of contrition.

A deep and permanent godly sorrow must take possession of our hearts. This feeling will arise from a conviction of hidden corruptions and inward unlikeness to God—will consist in a perfect self-abhorrence and self-renunciation. If we have not wickedly departed from God, or backslidden in heart, it will not imply condemnation or a sense of guilt. It is a feeling which is entirely consistent with a sense of the divine favour, or the evidence of pardon. It is a self-loathing, arising from clear views of the holiness of God, and the deep taint of human depravity. The experience of Job furnishes a fine illustration of the repentance of a justified person who seeks a clean heart. Before God, by a mysterious train of providences and the revelation of himself, had led him to a full view of the hidden corruptions of his nature, he justified himself. But what were his subsequent views? Saith he, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent as in dust and ashes.” His former views of God had been comparatively obscure, and he had thought proportionably well of himself. But a clear revelation of the holiness of the divine character brought him into the dust. We know not that even now he accuses himself of flagrant iniquity, but still he sees occasion for infinite self-abhorrence, and the most profound repentance. As says the poet:—

“I loathe myself when God I see,  
And into nothing fall.”

It is true that this repentance can only be originated in the soul by the Spirit of God. But it is equally true its exercise is dependant upon volition, and hence it is a human duty as well as a divine grace. A sinner may feel remorse without his consent and against his

will, but true godly sorrow is a voluntary state of the mind. It is the result of consent given to the claims of our rightful Sovereign—the fruit of cherished convictions. The damned in hell will doubtless feel eternal remorse, but their dark bosoms will never be the seat of a single emotion of true godly sorrow.

In seeking entire sanctification, we must pry into the secrets of our inmost souls. We must be willing, yea, desirous, to know the very worst of our case. The great deep of our hearts—all their hidden recesses—must be matters of toilsome scrutiny, and of painful solicitude. Our prayer must be like that of David, “Search me, O God, and know my heart,” &c. And upon a full discovery of our real vileness, we shall lose sight of all the good we have ever done. We shall fall into our native nothingness. We shall hide our face in the dust—proclaim our sinfulness—and, losing all confidence in the flesh, we shall look about for some other sanctuary than our own righteousness.

When Isaiah “saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple;” then he saw his own vileness, and was led to exclaim, “Wo is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips,” Isa. vi, 1, 5. When we seek for that true godly sorrow for our inward corruptions of which I am speaking, we should pray for a revelation to the eye of our faith of the glories and majesty of the divine character. We should study that character—we should turn our eyes from all beside, until, “by beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

The states of mind which I have brought to view will prepare the way for another, which occupies the highest place in the estimate, and without which all

that we have previously noticed and urged will be of no consequence whatever. This I shall now proceed to consider.

4. The grand condition upon which our entire sanctification is suspended, and which must be met and discharged, is *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*.

We are sanctified as well as justified by faith, and in both instances faith is the same in nature. It has respect to the doctrines and facts, to the precepts, and to the promises, of the gospel. In relation to the doctrines and facts it is *credence*, in relation to the precepts *assent*, and in relation to the promises *confidence*. The great difference between the faith which justifies and that which sanctifies wholly, is, that the former contemplates simple pardon, or the cancelling of guilt; while the latter respects the destruction of inward sin, and the entire restoration of the divine image.

I need not here discuss the subject of faith in general. It is very important, however, that the peculiarities of sanctifying faith should be well understood. For the want of this many stumble at the threshold, and do not come into the possession of the blessing they earnestly desire.

*First*, then, this faith implies a perception of the amplitude of the provisions of the gospel for the complete deliverance of the soul from sin, and of the special promise made of the accomplishment of the work for all that believe.

I scarcely need urge that we shall not, that we cannot, rationally seek what we do not see provided and promised in the gospel. This may be assumed as a matter of course. The fact that some may have obtained *perfect love* without a distinct faith in the doctrine of Christian perfection as we hold it, is not in the least against my position. In all such cases the subject

must have seen this high attainment provided and promised in the gospel, and must have sought it, though the *name* or the *definition* we employ may never have been used. Names are not always essential to things. And though we would adhere to Scriptural names, and must continue to believe this the safest and best way to preserve the identity of the things which they are used to signify, yet we doubt not but in numerous instances the things themselves are enjoyed and realized where, through the influence of unfortunate prejudices, the appropriate names are discarded.

We must then see the provision made for our entire sanctification, and that God has explicitly promised this blessing. I have before discussed those passages where these provisions and promises are found, and need not here refer to them again. It is not difficult to gain assent to the general fact that there are such provisions and promises. The grand difficulty is in bringing the matter home to ourselves. This brings us to another point.

*Secondly.* We must feel an inward confidence that these provisions are made for *us*. I can much more easily believe that "exceeding great and precious promises" are made to the church in general, or the believing in general, than I can that they are made to *me*—to my *unworthy, wretched* SELF. But the faith that brings the blessing of perfect love must so far honour the riches of divine grace as to regard the provision made for *me*, and made as truly for *me* as though there had not been another in the whole universe to need such provision.

As Wesleyan Methodists, we all believe in the amplitude of the gospel provisions. We believe that the blood of Christ can even *now* cleanse the soul from *all sin*. We contend for the truth of the doctrine,



and rejoice to hear those who have experienced its power make profession of the great things God has done for them. But ah ! to come home to ourselves, how few of us, comparatively, feel a personal interest in this great subject ! How many, after all, seem to doubt whether it is indeed possible for them to attain to a state of entire sanctification ! We must, however, come to this. A general faith, indeed, has its use—it saves us from infidelity and universal skepticism ; but it will not bring us into possession of the provisions of the gospel. “Hast thou faith ? have it to thyself before God.” Come thou thyself near to the throne of the heavenly grace. Do not throw the whole world, nor the whole church, between thee and thy God ; but approach him with boldness—with humble confidence. Come into the King’s presence, and be assured he will reach thee the golden sceptre, and thou shalt find favour and honour from him, whom thou hast too long grieved with thy slowness of heart to believe all that he hath spoken. But there is still a more difficult point to be gained before this faith is complete.

*Thirdly.* We must believe that this blessing is for us *now*.

The faith that the blessing may be had some time or another—at some future indefinite period—will not prevail. It must contemplate the provision as within our reach—as *now* at hand. It will not admit of delay—it knows no inconvenient season. It says, surely, “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” Its language is, “Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven ? (that is, to bring Christ down from above ;) or, Who shall descend into the deep ? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it ? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart : that is, the word of faith

which we preach ; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved," Rom. x, 6-9.

Here it should be remarked, 1. That the faith spoken of is *believing with the heart*. And 2. It brings the blessing near, right home, and appropriates it. It does not contemplate the great salvation as so high or so profound, or so far away, that a long journey, or a difficult or doubtful process, is to intervene before the object can be gained. No : glory, and honour, and praise, to God and the Lamb for ever and ever, "the word of faith is *nigh thee*—even in thy mouth and in thy heart !" Amen ! so let it be ! "Even so ; come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

This, I say, is the most difficult point of all to gain. Often the enemy entrenches himself here, and prepares for the grand encounter. At all points previously he had been forced to yield. The seeker after entire sanctification is enabled to believe such a blessing provided, and provided even for him ; but the question is, *when* may he come into possession of it ? The enemy suggests, *not quite yet*—you are too unworthy—you are not yet prepared for it—you must feel more deeply the need of it—you must mourn and pray longer—you must wait patiently—circumstances are unfavourable—you must gather around you more helps—you must go somewhere, or do some great thing, before God will visit you with the great salvation. Now, if we stop and hesitate upon any of these points, hell triumphs, and we go out again to sea. But here is the very point where we are to honour God and confound the devil by believing—by crediting all God's promises. Hear the Saviour now crying out, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith ?" And while he *marvels* at our un-

*belief*, how is it that we *fear to believe*? That we, in our blindness, consider it *presumptuous* to credit the word of our great High Priest? O, why not leave our fruitless toiling, and calmly and confidently resign our cause to the Captain of our salvation?

Mr. Fletcher gives us the following beautiful illustration of the point I am urging:—

“Believers generally go on to Christian perfection as the disciples went to the other side of the sea of Galilee. They toiled some time very hard, and with little success; but after they had ‘rowed about twenty-five or thirty furlongs, they saw Jesus walking on the sea. He said to them, It is I, be not afraid; then they willingly received him into the ship, and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.’ Just so, we toil till our faith discovers Christ in the promise, and welcomes him into our hearts; and such is the effect of his presence, that immediately we arrive at the land of perfection. Or, to use another illustration, God says to believers, ‘Go to the Canaan of perfect love; arise, why do ye tarry? Wash away the remains of sin, calling, that is, believing, on the name of the Lord.’ And if they submit to the obedience of faith, he deals with them as he did with the evangelist Philip, to whom he had said, ‘Arise, and go toward the south.’ For when they ‘arise and run,’ as Philip did, the Spirit of the Lord takes them, as he did the evangelist; and they are found in the New Jerusalem, as ‘Philip was found at Azotus.’ They ‘dwell in God,’ or in perfect love, ‘and God,’ or perfect love, dwells ‘in them.’”

5. I would urge the necessity of attendance upon all the means of grace.

We have seen that the only condition, strictly so called, upon which entire sanctification is suspended,

is *faith*. But this faith must be associated with certain states of mind and courses of action. It cannot subsist alone. The states of mind which precede and accompany this faith I have already noticed. I shall now proceed to speak of the course of conduct necessary to be pursued.

It will be scarcely necessary to urge that he who would seek for entire conformity to the will of God must forsake all evil courses. The means of grace cannot be acceptably performed while we indulge in known sin. The psalmist says: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Forsaking every crooked way, and turning our back upon the vain pomp and glory of the world, we must betake ourselves to all the great duties of piety, charity, and mortification prescribed in the gospel. Here I need not go extensively into particulars. Some few of the duties which are of special importance, and which imply the rest, I shall proceed to notice.

Reading devotionally the Holy Scriptures, communicating at the Lord's table, hearing the word preached, fasting or abstinence, and prayer, will be found not only serviceable but imperatively necessary. We call these *means of grace*—not because they, of themselves, infallibly secure the grace of God, but because they are outward duties, to the right performance of which God promises his blessing. Any negligence in these duties exposes a wrong state of the moral feelings, and the absence of the essential conditions upon which God suspends the gift of the Holy Spirit. But we must guard against making any of these means either *grace itself* or the *cause* of grace. Sanctifying grace is a spiritual and invisible influence, which proceeds from the infinite fulness of divine love. We can do nothing to deserve it. All we can do is to seek

it in God's appointed way, and then receive it as a mere gratuity, feeling that "after we have done all, we are unprofitable servants—we have done nothing more than was our duty to do."

After these general remarks it may not be unnecessary to give a more particular view of one leading duty—I refer to *prayer*. Prayer is the soul's converse with God—and God has seen proper to require it of all. None will doubt but God might have instituted some other plan or mode of intercourse between man and his Maker. None will doubt but he might have so arranged the conditions of his kingdom that men might receive gracious and saving influences without asking for them, had he seen this best. But the fact that he has instituted prayer as the way or means of access to the throne of grace, is abundantly asserted in the Scriptures, and exhibits no incongruity with any of the various developments of wisdom and goodness with which we are acquainted in the divine arrangements. And such an arrangement seems an eminent exhibition of wisdom and goodness. What better could our heavenly Father have done for us than to have said, "Ask, and ye shall receive." Poor, and unworthy, and wretched as we are, we can "ask." It is the province of *paupers* to *beg*—they can *ask* and *receive*, though they have nothing to *pay*.

The faith of which I have spoken has special reference to Christ. It submits to his governance, rests upon his atonement, and trusts his promises. Prayer for entire sanctification principally contemplates the agency of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit is the grand efficient agent in the great work of renewing the soul in the image of God. And for the aid of the Holy Spirit we are instructed to pray. It was when the disciples were all with one accord in one place,



lifting up their hearts in prayer, that the Holy Ghost fell upon them, on the day of Pentecost. And our Saviour says, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

For this baptism of the Spirit we must pray in secret. Retiring from the world—shutting out its cares—we must pour forth a torrent of ardent supplications. Our soul's desires, like the smoking incense, must ascend to the very heavens, and curling around the divine throne, present a sweet savour to the Eternal. O how heaven-like is the closet! How sacred the place where man is in audience with the Deity! Here let the thirsty soul breathe out the unutterable prayer. Though thoughts too big for expression may labour in the recesses of the soul, there is a consciousness that "God knows them all together." Though the anguish of the spirit is too terrible for endurance, here the soul's best Friend eminently resides, and in the fulness of his compassion says to the weary and heavy-laden, *Roll your burdens on me*. "Cast thy burdens on the Lord, and he will sustain thee." Though your sins are as mountains, he will annihilate them with a word. "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee." Though your corruptions, like a swelling tide, threaten to bear you away to the gulf of eternal ruin, his infinite love will dry up the vast abyss. For he promises to "purge away our sins till there be none of them." And though misery and grief shall be ready to swallow you up, he will give you comfort. "For, behold," saith he, "I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and my people a joy." Here, then, I say, in your closet go to God in prayer, and plead his promises and your own wretchedness and wants, and God will meet

you there, for he has said he would. He has promised, and he will perform.

Social prayer will be found especially beneficial. The pious vicar of Madeley especially recommends this.

“Social prayer is closely connected with faith in the capital promise of the sanctifying Spirit; and therefore I earnestly recommend that mean of grace, where it can be had, as being eminently conducive to the attaining of Christian perfection. When many believing hearts are lifted up, and wrestle with God in prayer together, you may compare them to many diligent hands which work a large machine. At such times, particularly, the fountains of the great deep are broken up, the windows of heaven are opened, and ‘rivers of living water flow’ from the heart of obedient believers.

‘In Christ when brethren join,  
And follow after peace,  
The fellowship divine  
He promises to bless,  
His chiefest graces to bestow  
Where two or three are met below.

‘Where unity takes place,  
The joys of heaven we prove;  
This is the gospel grace,  
The unction from above,  
The Spirit on all believers shed,  
Descending swift from Christ their Head.’

“Accordingly we read, that, when God powerfully opened the kingdom of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, the disciples ‘were all with one accord in one place.’ And when he confirmed that kingdom, they were lifting up ‘their voice to God with one accord.’ See Acts ii, 1, and iv, 24. Thus also the believers at Samaria were filled with the Holy Ghost,

the Sanctifier, while Peter and John prayed with them, and laid hands upon them.”\*

But if we would soon prevail, we must acquire a habit of prayer that overcomes all difficulties and bends to no circumstances. We must pray without ceasing. When we so deeply feel the need of full redemption in the blood of Christ, that whether we walk in the way, or toil in the field, or do business at the counter, or are in company, our souls breathe out every moment the prayer of David, “Give me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me,” we are upon the very threshold of the inner sanctuary. A little more holding on upon the horns of the altar—a little more faith—one single venture of the whole upon “the everlasting arms,” and the work is done.

But let it not be forgotten that the offering up of our prayers for entire sanctification must be characterized by the mental states which I have previously described. *We must fix our attention upon this one object.* This must be every thing to us. For the time the hell we would be delivered from, must be the hell of inbred sin; and the heaven we would obtain, the heaven of loving God alone. We must desire it above any thing beside. We must come to God with a broken and a contrite heart. We must believe that God is able, and that he is willing to do the work for us, and to do it *now*. With these feelings and views, in this condition of the mind, we must come to God in prayer, and as sure as God is, he will give us the desire of our hearts.

This, then, is the way in which we are to go on to perfection, or to secure that entire sanctification which God, who is *faithful*, has promised, and which we may have, thank God, even *now*.

\* Last Check, see. xix.

I will conclude this lecture with several *cautions*.

1. Do not be frightened from your purpose by the heat of the conflict.

A great object is to be gained, and if great difficulties are to be overcome, and great sacrifices to be made, what is this more than should be expected? Indeed, it should little concern us how God shall see proper to bring us to our desired haven, only so that we are safely brought there in due time. And what if, to mortify our pride, he drag us through the mire? What if, to melt our stony hearts, he bring us through the fire? What if, in bringing us into the land of Canaan, he makes us contend with the swellings of Jordan? Yea, what if he bring us through the wilderness—through an enemy's land? What if we are called to encounter fierce opposition, and to hear the noise of war and of the battle, and to take the land at the point of the sword? What of all this? The Captain of our salvation goes out before us, and promises to lead us safely through. He never lost a battle. He has vanquished death—conquered the powers of hell—and procured for us eternal redemption. All we have to do is to trust our cause with him and follow his heavenly guidance. And though he bring us through the fire, or through the water, he will see that we come in safety and in triumph to the mount of holiness, even to our spiritual Jerusalem. But this is a blessing not reserved for the cowardly and the faint-hearted, or for those who lust for the flesh-pots of Egypt. They will die in the wilderness—fall by the hand of the destroyer, and perish miserably for ever and ever.

2. Be not in too great haste to enjoy the *comforts* of this blessed state. Make the victory your object, and you will in due time be enabled to enjoy the spoils. Seek, principally, that the work should be deep and

thorough : that your heart should be fully circumcised : that all the enemies of the Lord should be slain, not doubting but when this is done, God will set up the empire of peace in your soul.

3. Be not impatient with apparent delays. If God does not come at once, it is because you are not ready to receive him. And if your unbelief has delayed the application of the sovereign remedy, why should you find fault with God ? Should you throw yourself still further out at sea because you have not been permitted to enter the harbour by an impracticable passage ? No, no ! Make your observations anew. Improve by your former errors. Ah ! abandon your former pilot, worldly prudence, and put yourself under the direction of the one infallible, unerring Guide, who will in due time bring you into the port of peace.

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## LECTURE XVII.

### THE MOTIVES AND REASONS FOR SEEKING ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION.

“Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” Heb. xii, 14.

THE interest of the subject heightens as we proceed—the point next to be considered is in advance of any thing heretofore presented. It is indeed important to have right views of the subject. I have accordingly endeavoured to present it in as clear a light as possible. But after all, the great object is to feel properly impressed with the importance of a personal experience of the great work in our own hearts. Our knowledge upon the subject will be of comparatively small importance, if we remain unaffected by its



great motives. The great object of all doctrinal discussion should be to prepare the way for action—to give birth to practical movements.

There is an impressiveness in truth itself which awakens and stirs the mind not armed against it. But there are certain great sanctions whose office especially is to produce the right impressions, and to call the powers of the soul into action. The human mind is so constituted that it will be influenced by motives. And the kingdom of Christ is suited to this feature of man's rational and moral nature. Motives high, vast, glorious, and terrible, are brought to bear upon the requirements of God, to give them their due importance, and make them practically influential. The great arguments of the gospel must take so deep a hold upon the moral feelings as that the will of God becomes the paramount principle of action. To bring out some of the leading reasons which enforce the duty of seeking entire sanctification—of going on to perfection—shall be the purpose of this lecture.

1. It is the will of God.

This the apostle expressly asserts. "It is the will of God, even your sanctification," 1 Thess. iv, 3. Again: "The God of peace sanctify you wholly. Faithful is he who calleth you, who also will do it." 1 Thess. v, 23, 24. There are two senses in which the will of God may be understood, in both of which it is predicated of our entire sanctification. The first is the *permissive* sense. This implies that God is willing that we should be sanctified wholly; it is in perfect accordance with his *good pleasure*. He has no plan, or purpose, or desire in opposition to our entire conformity to his image. This, considering the evil nature and the ruinous effects of sin, is a development of his goodness, and should of itself be a sufficient reason for our

availing ourselves of the privilege so graciously vouchsafed. The case is just this : we have about us the remains of a deadly malady, and our good Physician is willing to put forth his skill and effect in us a perfect cure. We have in our hearts remaining roots of bitterness, which ever and anon spring up and trouble us, and our grand Restorer is willing to extract them. Now why should there be any hesitating on our part in relation to the matter ? If the sovereign cure is desirable, and God is willing to effect it, why delay a moment in applying for the remedy ?

But *secondly*, it is the will of God in the *authoritative* sense—he *requires* us to seek this entire holiness. The length and breadth of the evangelical law is this : “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength :” and what is this but a state of entire sanctification ?—and what less could God require ? There is no disagreement among Christians here : all admit that God requires entire holiness. But the point in which we differ from others is, that we not only logically conclude the attainableness of this state, but urge the *duty* of *seeking* it *now*, from the fact of its being required. And who can show the argument illogical, or the exhortation baseless.

The will of God is paramount law. If we resist or neglect it, we are guilty of disobedience—we contract guilt, and come into condemnation. What then is the condition of those Christians who do not seek at all the entire sanctification which God requires ? Are they *doing the will of God* ? Let all concerned lay their hand upon their heart and decide this question according to truth and evidence. I must not be understood to say that all who are not entirely sanctified are in a state of damning sin : this sentiment I have explicitly

and honestly disavowed on a former occasion. But what I do mean is, that those Christians who do not seek, and seek constantly, for an entirely sanctified nature, *fall into condemnation*. And I may add, that this condemnation must be removed by pardon, upon repentance, or it will finally “drown the soul in destruction and perdition.”

The will of God, then, both permissive and authoritative, is a grand reason why we should seek for entire sanctification.

2. I urge the honour and glory of God.

The Westminster catechism truly teaches us that “man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever.” God made man for his own glory: and in accordance with this end, he made him “in his own image.” It is the image of God in man that reflects the glory of the divine nature. In proportion as man is destitute of this image does he dishonour God, and thwart the high purposes of his being. In our natural, unrenewed state, we are entirely destitute of this image; in our regenerate state its lineaments begin to develop themselves; and in our entire sanctification it is wholly restored. How then can we glorify God fully until we are wholly sanctified?

Again. God is glorified in the accomplishment of the ends of the Saviour’s mission into the world. Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the devil—he came to abolish sin—to redeem his people from its power, and to wash them from its stains. How then can God, in the highest sense, be glorified in us until this is accomplished? In the Saviour’s memorable prayer, just before his passion, he bore his disciples to the throne of the heavenly grace in this language: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth;” and then says, “And for their sakes I sanctify myself,

that they also might be sanctified through the truth," John xvii, 17, 19. He doubtless speaks here of *entire* sanctification, for the disciples had certainly already been made the subjects of the first beginnings of this work. The idea then is that Christ had *sanctified*, i. e., *set apart* himself to the mediatorial work, to the end that his people might be fully sanctified through the truth. The object of the Saviour's mission is then but partially accomplished, and God but partially glorified in us, so long as we are sanctified but in part. Shall we then give the Saviour the honour of a complete triumph over our fallen natures—shall we give to God the whole mead of glory—shall Christ be glorified in us, and "the Father be glorified in the Son," *in our complete restoration to holiness?*

Finally. God is not glorified in our lives until they are fully conformed to his will. St. Paul says, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are his," 1 Cor. vi, 19, 20. "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thess. i, 11, 12. A blameless and holy life is the only way to honour God before the world. And who can suppose that a life spotted with many sins in "word and deed," as well as in "thought," is as acceptable to God, and as promotive of his glory, as one altogether "unspotted from the world." Every sin soils the Christian's garments, and disgraces his high and holy profession. If the church is the light and glory of the world, and the Christian's walk is the outward expression of the hidden life within, and the

imbodiment of the true character of that religion he professes, and the reflection of the image of the invisible God, is it not upright? Should he not, then, walk as Christ also walked? How else can we fully honour God in our lives?

In every view the honour of God is concerned in our present entire sanctification. As, then, we would glorify the God that made us, and the Saviour who has redeemed us, we must seek a heart wholly renewed—we must “go on to perfection.”

3. Our *usefulness* in the church and the world is an important consideration in favour of our seeking entire sanctification.

Our Saviour says to his disciples, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,” Matt. v, 16. If we have been converted and brought into the church, it is to the end that we may add as much as possible to the common stock of influence and moral power—that we may contribute our quota to the tide of effort that, under God, is to work the regeneration of the world. And it will be admitted on all hands, I presume, that our moral power will be precisely in proportion to the measure of our grace. If we lose our grace, like the salt that has lost its savour, we are “good for nothing.” If we have little grace we shall do but little good; and if we are “filled with all the fulness of God,” we shall exert a *vast* influence upon the best interests of men.

There are several ways in which we are required to exert a good influence upon the moral condition of others. One of these is by our *words*, in teaching, exhorting, admonishing, and reproving them. When, then, will we be likely to do this work the most effectually? When we are “renewed in knowledge after the



image of God," and when "the love of God is perfected in us," and when our walk is "unblamable and unreprouvable before God;" or when our understanding is darkened, and our spiritual energies are paralyzed, or at least greatly weakened, by our corruptions; and when those we would benefit turn upon us the soul-withering rebuff, "Physician, heal thyself?" In order to teach the way to heaven with clearness and effect, must we not be deeply and thoroughly acquainted with the things of God? In order to "exhort and reprove with all long-suffering and doctrine"—to set our face with confidence against the world, and "testify of it that its works are evil," must we not be able to say, "Herein do I exercise myself, always to have a conscience void of offence both toward God and men," and "our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, (not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God,) we have had our conversation in the world?" All this Paul could say, and what power did it impart to his preaching,—what potency to his reproofs! The arguments that convince, and the words that burn, come from sanctified lips—come blazing from a heart itself on fire with the perfect love of God.

How important then is a holy ministry! Well was the injunction given, "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." The church will scarcely take a higher stand in religion than that which is occupied by the ministry. And the ministry will lead the flock on in paths of peace and holiness in the same proportion in which they are themselves possessed of the spirit of holiness. And they will be a terror to the ungodly, and will check the outbreakings of sin, and curtail the tide of corruption in the world, in the same proportion in which they are possessed of the spirit of the

holy prophets, apostles, and blessed martyrs of olden time.

It is, also, vastly important, though it cannot be said to be *equally* important, that exhorters, class-leaders, and superintendents and teachers of sabbath-schools should be clad with the armour of holiness and righteousness. Great interests are committed to their trust—they are made, in a measure, responsible for the spiritual improvement and the final salvation of multitudes of souls redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. And the more deeply they are imbued with the spirit of their Lord and Master, the better and the more successfully will they discharge their important trust.

The same may be said of parents and heads of families; and, indeed, to a certain extent, of all private Christians. They all are members of the great social compact, and all have gifts to improve for the edification of the church and benefit of mankind. And their vast responsibilities will be met, as they are holy in heart and in life, and in all manner of conversation.

Another mode of serving the interests of the church and the world is by our *prayers*.

We have abundant evidence that the prayers of holy men and women are availing. When God was about to punish the disobedient Israelites, Moses threw himself into the breach, and by his intercessions the sword of justice was stayed. The language of the Almighty upon this occasion gives a strong idea of the power of prayer. Says he, "*Let me alone, that I may destroy them:*" as though the intercessions of his servant bound the hand of justice. While Moses prays, God forbears, though the occasion is one of great provocation. "Elijah prayed, and it rained not upon the earth by the space of three years and six months: and again

he prayed, and the heavens gave rain." The dying martyr Stephen prayed, and the young man, Saul, who kept the garments of them that slew him, was soon after converted. St. Augustine says, If Stephen had not prayed, Saul had not been converted. Though we are not assured of this in the record, yet there is no hazard in presuming a connection between the prayer of the martyr and the conversion of the persecutor.

Indeed, we have the most ample and positive assurances that prayer has mighty influence with God. "He will avenge his own elect who cry day and night unto him. He will do it speedily." And he has even assured us that "*whatsoever*" we "ask in faith, nothing doubting," he "will give it us." This is a wonderful promise, but is no less true than marvellous. It is almost too much to suppose, that no prayer offered up to God in faith can fail of its object. It is still true that all prayers offered up to God in submission and confidence will prevail. The answer may not be given according to our notions of things, or according to our expectations, but will be given in a way far better than we could devise. Paul prayed thrice to God that he would take away the thorn in the flesh. This prayer God answered, but not in the way the apostle expected. The answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." So our believing prayers will all be answered, either in the thing asked or in an equivalent—or far more than an equivalent. All this is as true in relation to our intercessions for others as our simple petitions for blessings for ourselves.

When, then, may it be presumed that our prayers will gain the readiest access to the ear of God? When we love him with a perfect love, and believe in him with a perfect faith, and submit to his will with perfect resignation: or when all our graces are mingled

with alloy, and deficient in both their compass and vigour? St. John says: "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight," 1 John iii, 21, 22. It is, then, when we do the will of God, and keep a pure conscience, that we can approach God with "confidence" that "whatsoever we ask we shall receive of him."

As we then would bring upon the church a tide of prosperity; as we would hold back the heaviest judgments of Almighty God from a guilty world; as we would have sinners arrested by the Spirit of God; as we would bring peace and joy to those who mourn in Zion; as we would help on believers in seeking for entire deliverance from sin: in fine, as we would have our prayers tell upon the best interests of the church and the world, we must seek entire conformity to the will and image of God. Of what avail will be a few cold, heartless, selfish, formal prayers? They will prove a curse instead of a blessing to mankind. If we would have our prayers availing, we must be moved by an expansive charity; "bowels of mercy, kindness," &c.; we must exert a commanding faith; we must have *power with God*.

The last mode I shall mention in which we may exert a good influence upon others, in this connection, is that of *example*.

Our Saviour said to his disciples: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid: neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house," Matt. v, 14, 15. Need I attempt to prove that Christians will reflect the most

light when they are most conformed to the image of God? As the spots which sometimes appear in the sun do not wholly obstruct its light, so the defects which appear in the lives of Christians, provided they are not striking or numerous, do not render their influence, on the whole, pernicious. Still it cannot be a question but a life wholly free from all moral delinquencies is inconceivably more effective in its influence upon the well-being of society than the one frequently tarnished with acts of disobedience, or of a worldly spirit.

When Christians love the Lord with all their hearts, love the souls of men more than their own ease, honour, or emolument, and “love each other with a pure heart fervently,” their example speaks volumes, and preaches more effectively than words in favour of the cause they profess to love. Then they “put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” Then the gospel acquires an influence which wins its way to the hearts of the multitude. The sacramental host of God’s elect—clad with the panoply of God, saved from the corruptions which are in the world, and armed with holy faith and mighty prayer—holds in check the powers of hell, and triumphs over the most formidable obstacles. In her infancy, when few in numbers, the church, by her purity, silenced the objections of philosophers, and broke the power of persecution—successfully assailed the strong holds of superstition, and finally demolished the whole fabric of idolatry, which had been rendered venerable and sacred by the lapse of ages. She “quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness was made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” The simple preaching of the cross, accompanied by a holy, self-denying life, like an earthquake struck dumb a



giddy and clamorous world, and carried terror to the very gates of hell! Who can look back to the period when Christianity achieved her noblest triumphs, and see altars and temples crumbling to dust, and the gods of the heathen given to the moles and to the bats—the church multiplied and increased under the bloodiest persecutions—martyrs going to the stake in ecstasy, and their very executioners converted by the grandeur of their examples, and in their turn following them to the possession of the martyr's crown—who, I say, can survey these scenes without feeling convinced that there is a power altogether unearthly in a life of purity and self-denial?

These wonderful demonstrations are, no doubt, to be expected in the latter times. The church is destined to a higher grade of purity than she now enjoys. And when the purity and simplicity of the apostolic age shall characterize the great mass of Christian believers—when the institutions of Christianity shall be strictly conformed to the original plan, and the members of the church shall all stand forth completely armed with “the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,” then will “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him,” Dan. vii, 27.

That we may act favourably upon the condition of the church and upon the destinies of the world in all these various respects, we must be holy. And if we would exert the most potent influence upon these great interests we should seek entire sanctification.

4. Our own best interests require that we seek entire sanctification without the least delay.

I have before urged that it will be a safeguard against backsliding and apostacy. It is equally sure that we shall make the most certain and rapid progress in the divine life, and enjoy the greatest amount of spiritual consolation, if we aspire to the whole mind of Christ. Then may we “always” be caused “to triumph in Christ”—“rejoice evermore: pray without ceasing: in every thing give thanks.”

We complain of a want of religious comfort—we go mourning with our heads bowed down like a bulrush, and scarcely suspect the cause to be the want of the high state of grace which I here urge. How little solid religious comfort have most Christians! And the cause is, that they have so little love, so little faith, so little likeness to Christ—so much conformity to the world. We sometimes almost reflect upon God on account of our barrenness of enjoyment and our many failures. But God has only promised us his abiding presence, and a fulness of divine consolation, and constant victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, on the condition that we devote ourselves unreservedly to him—that we “go on to perfection.” But, alas for us! We are looking for the end without the means; we want the crown, but will not bear the cross; we thirst for the reward, but object to the labour and the sacrifice.

The crosses and burdens of Christianity are easy and sweet to him who is fully sanctified. The duties, the most grievous to flesh and blood, are, to him, a source of sacred pleasure. He says, in the language of the poet,—

“Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,  
If thou, my God, art here.”

Whether called to endure toils or make sacrifices, to suffer afflictions or endure reproaches; yea, if re-

quired, to leave home and kindred, and take up his abode with savage men—to exchange the delicacies and refinements of the city, of the parlour, and the toilet, for the destitution of the wilderness and the filth of the wigwam, he is ready to say, “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead,” Phil. iii, 7–11.

And is there not something truly desirable in the testimony of a good conscience, and a full assurance of the divine protection and blessing? If we can lie down to rest with peace of mind, and a full assurance that whether we awake in this world or the other, all is well; and arise in the morning with a grateful song of praise bursting from a full heart; surely we are in an enviable state of mind. In a world of utter uncertainty and fluctuation, what state so desirable as that which is implied in the language of Paul: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor

angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii, 35-39. This is the present triumph of perfect love. How desirable is this state, then, if we look merely to the present life !

But how does the importance of the attainment increase when we look to the final hour ? When called to contend with the swellings of Jordan, of what inconceivable importance will it be to us to be in a state of entire readiness to pass into our changeless state ! Mr. Wesley gives it as his opinion, that most Christians are not wholly sanctified until just before death. The evidence of this is not only the fact that they do not enjoy the blessedness of the state of perfect love for any considerable portion of their lives, but also the fact, that as they approach the final struggle, they usually pass through a series of painful and agonizing regrets with regard to the past, and the most distressing misgivings with regard to their future and final state ; and are brought at length to a full surrender of themselves to God, and then they resign the world with all its dearest interests, and sink into eternity full of hope. Now believing, as we do, that we may pass through this struggle, and come into the possession of a faith that lays firm hold of immortality any length of time before death, as well as in its immediate prospect, why should we delay the work until the moment in which, above all others, it is the most difficult. How much better to be able to say with Dr. Clarke, who, when his friends saw his end was near, and suggested to him that it would be necessary for him to prepare soon to meet his Judge, said promptly, *I have prepared already*: to feel that we are *ready* for the approach of death in

any form and at any time ; and when death shall come, to welcome him without fear or alarm : to be able to say with Paul, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day ; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Tim. iv, 6-8.

Look, also, to the day of judgment, and to an eternal state, and see what an accumulation of motives here present themselves for an early and complete victory over sin. Will it be of no importance, then, that we shall have triumphed early over the evils of our natures ? Will it detract nothing from our honour and happiness that we retained to the very last in our hearts some of the enemies of the Lord ? In what light will we then view our littleness of faith, our apathy in relation to the great work of entire holiness ? When Wesley, and Fletcher, and Carvosso, and others are seated near the throne, where will we be ? These are serious questions, which it becomes us wisely to answer. But I must forbear. The theme is one in the sublimity of which our utmost conceptions fail.

If the souls of men are precious ; if we are made in any measure responsible for them ; if heaven and hell are realities ; and the judgment day is not a phantom, "let us go on to perfection." O let us be moved by the Saviour's sweat, and tears, and blood ; by the agonies of the garden ; by the groans of Calvary ; by the solemnities of death ; by the terrors of the judgment ; by the pains of hell and by the joys of heaven, to go on to perfection ! Pressed by such motives, why "stand" we "here all the day idle ?" Earth groans ! heaven invites ! hell threatens ! and yet we sleep !!



Time flies, the Saviour woos, eternity is at hand!!! When will the great—the all-absorbing motives of God's word exert their appropriate influence upon Christians? Shall we be moved by the trifles around us? shall we spend our time and strength in labouring to acquire riches, honours, and pleasures? and shall there be no place in our minds for such considerations as I have adduced?

“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,  
With all thy quick'ning powers,  
Kindle a flame of sacred love  
In these cold hearts of ours.”

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## LECTURE XVIII.

### THE EVIDENCES OF ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION.

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself,” 1 John v, 10.

It is but reasonable to conclude that if such a state as we contend for is ever attained in the present life, it would be accompanied by certain signs or evidences which would satisfactorily indicate its existence; at least the subject of it would have some sort of evidence of his being in that state. It shall be the object of the present lecture to inquire into the evidence which a person entirely sanctified may be expected to have of that great change.

And in the *first* place, fully to guard against all mistaken conclusions, it will be proper to consider the subject negatively—to speak of several things which are not to be considered as evidences of this state.

1. Exemption from temptation is not to be considered as a consequence of the great change implied in entire

sanctification, or the continued enjoyment of that holy and blessed state.

*Temptation* in general signifies *trial* or *test*; and when it has reference to moral evil, it is permitted as a trial of our faith or virtue. Temptations to sin are from without—that is, they are not impulsions of the mind, but the suggestions or solicitations of an evil agent. Evil impulses are themselves sin. They arise from the corruptions of the heart. “From the heart proceedeth evil things,” &c. A heart that sends forth, as a fountain its streams, corrupt impulses, must consequently be unsanctified. But the assaults of evil agents may be made upon the purest mind. Our Lord Jesus Christ “was in all points tempted like as we are, and yet without sin.” The great difference between the temptations of those who are entirely sanctified and those who are not, is, that the temptation coming into contact with the latter, often stirs the sediment of corruption, while, assailing with equal violence the former, it meets with uniform resistance, and leaves no trace behind but an increase of moral power and the fruits of a new triumph.

The following views of the subject of temptation cast much light upon its most common and ordinary forms. I do not present them as a perfect analysis of the whole subject, nor wish them to go for authority any further than they are true to the decisions of Scripture and experience. Dr. Bates says of temptations:

“1. They may be distinguished by their quality. Unnatural thoughts against ourselves, and blasphemous of God, are usually from the tempter.

“2. When they make terrible impressions upon our spirits, they are his fiery darts. For the native offspring of our hearts are conceived with freedom and complacency.

“3. They are our infelicities, but induce no guilt when resisted by us. As the virgin, that cried out for rescue from violence, was declared by God himself innocent, so when the tempted soul, with strong cries, prays for divine relief, God will not lay those terrible injections to our charge. Our Saviour was tempted by the unclean spirit, yet was holy, harmless, and undefiled, (Matt. iv, Heb. vii, 26,) and has a compassionate tenderness for those who are tempted, and will make them partake of the fruits of his glorious victory. It is true, if the injections of Satan are cherished by the carnal mind, they are ours by adoption, though of his begetting. The devil put in the heart of Judas the design of betraying Christ, but it was entertained by his covetous mind, and involved him under the heaviest guilt. The inclinations of carnal men are to various sins, to which they are more inclinable by the temptations of Satan; but that does not excuse them from guilt.”\*

Another Christian philosopher presents the subject in the following perspicuous language:—

“Temptations, it will undoubtedly be conceded by those who have paid attention to the subject, are objects which are presented by the intellect to the sensibilities and the will; and are of such a nature that they have a tendency to induce or cause in those sensibilities, (that is to say, in the appetites, propensities, and affections,) and also in the will, an inordinate, excessive, or perverted action. The incipient, and what may be termed the *innocent* stage of the temptation, is when the object which is the medium of temptation is first presented to us intellectually; that is to say, in our mere thoughts or perceptions. Our Saviour was tempted by having the kingdoms and wealth of this

\* Spiritual Perfection, pp. 85, 86.

world presented before him, as objects of desire ; but the temptation went no further than the thoughts. It had no effect upon his desires or will ; but was immediately rejected. It was necessary that the object of temptation should exist intellectually ; in other words, that it should exist in the thoughts, or be perceived and thought of. Without this, viz., the perceived or intellectual presence of the object, it is entirely clear that there could not possibly be any such thing as temptation. But the temptation may exist to this extent without sin. The temptations, for instance, to which the Saviour was subjected, were in every instance entirely without sin ; for the simple reason, that they did not go beyond the thoughts ; they did not enter into the emotions and desires ; they excited no favourable or assenting feeling ; they caused no accordant action of the will ; but were instantly and fully repelled. They were not like sparks thrown upon tinder, and kindled into a blaze ; but rather like sparks thrown upon the ocean, and instantly extinguished.”\*

It is a question not always of easy solution, at what point the *mere temptation* terminates and *sin* begins—or when we may be said to *enter into temptation*. It will not be consistent with my general object in this lecture to enter into the metaphysics of this question. I wish to present the subject in as plain and practical a manner as possible, and not to go into a recondite disquisition, which would rather perplex the subject than render aid to the serious inquirer. I shall, then, simply lay down a few general principles which, I hope, will be obvious and indisputable.

*First*, then. I suppose all will admit, that when the temptation gains the concurrence of the will, the subject contracts *guilt*. There can be no doubt here.

\* Guide to Perfection.

The consent of the mind to a single act, or a course of actions, which God has forbidden, will bring upon us his displeasure ; nor will the *violence* of the temptation, or our natural tendencies toward the inhibited object, be any apology for our fault. For though God, for wise reasons, suffers us to be tempted, yet the temptations which he permits are not irresistible.

*Secondly.* It is equally clear, that when the temptation begets in the mind a *desire* for the forbidden object, the subject *enters into temptation*, and so sins against God. The perfectly formed desire, resting upon a forbidden object, is positive proof of an alienation of the affections from God, and of inherent depravity, the workings of which God must ever abhor.

*Thirdly.* It is also clear that temptations cannot be *invited*, or *unnecessarily protracted*, without an indication of a sinful tendency toward the forbidden object, and consequently, such a course not only implies the absence of entire sanctification, but involves the subject in actual sin. The pure mind will not only resist the assaults of evil, but will, as far as practicable, fly its very presence.

Another question of no little delicacy is, how far we are responsible for our *spontaneous emotions*—how far they go toward making up the moral character, and when they imply unsanctified affections. There can be no doubt but this class of mental states is much under the influence of our habits of thought and feeling :—that those whose minds are most decidedly under the influence of religious considerations and feelings will experience the fewest instances of such sudden and transient mental emotions as seem to indicate internal corruptions, or unsanctified affections, or are of doubtful character. It may be in some cases difficult to determine whether our spontaneous



emotions are the workings of a morbid state of the moral feelings, or purely the temptations of Satan. It is probable God, in his wisdom, has left the line of distinction between these mental states so deep and obscure, for the purpose of exercising our faculties of moral discrimination. And it is not to be questioned but those who the most constantly and carefully watch the operations of their own minds, and investigate the origin and tendency of their mental processes, will be the least liable to err fatally in their decisions upon this point. In a pure and healthy state of the mind, it will not be difficult, in general, to come to right conclusions in relation to the moral character of our thoughts and feelings—at least so far as is necessary to all practical purposes; and more than this is not at all essential. We should labour for such a knowledge of our own hearts, and of the great rule of moral duty, that we need not fall into the fatal conclusion, either that our temptations and infirmities are *sins*, or that our *real sins* are nothing but temptations or infirmities.

2. Uninterrupted joy is not to be regarded as an infallible accompaniment of entire sanctification.

Persons in a state of mere justification may often be filled with strong consolation, and at times be raised to ecstasies of joy; while it remains a fact that those whose whole soul and body are laid upon the altar are often in heaviness, for various causes. The changes in our physical constitution will often interrupt our joy. Sorrow may be a necessary discipline for the most perfect Christian, to advance his graces and keep him from falling.

It is not to be doubted but there have been cases of persons who, upon some extraordinary rapture, have erroneously supposed that all their corruptions were

taken away. And it is also a fact that some who have probably experienced the blessing of perfect love, have given up their confidence upon some season of sorrow, erroneously supposing that if they were freed from sin they would never sorrow more.

Lady Maxwell says:—"The Lord has taught me that it is by faith, and not joy, that I must live. He has, in a measure, often enabled me strongly to act faith on Jesus for sanctification, even in the absence of all comfort. This has diffused a heaven of sweetness through my soul, and brought with it the powerful witness of purity." Carvosso quotes this passage, and remarks upon it:—"I have recorded these remarks, because they so perfectly agree with my own views and experience."\* Two more competent witnesses in a case of this kind could scarcely be desired.

3. It need not be expected that a state of entire consecration to God will always be accompanied by extraordinary gifts.

The entirely sanctified minister will still have about him his natural or constitutional infirmities. He will probably be no more accurate or fluent than before, and may not be so much so as many others of far less religious attainments. There is a difference between gifts and grace. We may have an extraordinary amount of one, with but little of the other.

4. Great apparent success is not to be considered as an evidence of this state.

Many ministers, with a small amount of grace, and some, indeed, with none at all, have been very successful: and many holy men have appeared for the time to labour in vain, and spend their strength for naught. This unfruitfulness, however, is only in appearance. Futurity will develop the blessed effects of their pious

\* Memoir of Carvosso, p. 193.

toil. God will see to that. It is for us to labour in the right spirit, and it is with God to give the increase.

I shall now proceed to present what I conceive may be considered satisfactory evidence of a state of entire sanctification.

1. The witness of the Spirit—the testimony of God's Spirit that the soul is entirely sanctified.

I shall not now inquire whether any have ever felt this inward testimony, presuming that the fact will be supposed credible or incredible, as the evidence I have adduced in favour of the fact, that some have been entirely sanctified in this life, shall be credited or otherwise: for if it is conceded that this state is attainable, and has been attained, it will not, I presume, be very strenuously disputed but that it would probably be accompanied by satisfactory evidence of its existence. A satisfactory evidence of a work of grace in general has been admitted by evangelical divines, as well Calvinist as Arminian. Indeed this seems clearly settled in the Scriptures. St. Paul says: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," Rom. viii, 16. Upon this passage the learned Diodati, who was a member of the synod of Dort, and assisted in drawing up the Belgic confession, makes the following comment:—" 'The Spirit'—viz., As he sets us on to call God our father, so likewise assureth us on his part, and sealeth it in our hearts, that we are truly his children."\*

The Westminster divines upon this passage say:—"The Holy Ghost doth not only stir us up to call upon God as our father, but doth also seal unto our hearts, that we are truly his children: thus the Spirit testifieth to our spirit, (as some render the words;) but if we translate them, 'beareth witness with our spirits,' the

\* See Diodati's Annotations, *in loc.*

meaning is, that the Spirit witnesseth together with our own spirit, which doth likewise help to bear witness by observing the proper marks of God's adoption, which our spirit findeth in ourselves by the Spirit of God. This witness, though it be not always alike evident and powerful in true believers, yet it doth oftentimes manifest itself, even when they are in their lowest estate and greatest extremity."\*

St. John also clearly declares this doctrine. He says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself," 1 John v, 10. Upon these words Diodati says:—"In himself—That is to say, sounding, and imprinted in his heart, by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in him, and certifies, and puts him out of doubt, concerning this truth."†

Here then we have explicit proof from the New Testament, according to the interpretations of the best Calvinistic authorities, of *the witness of the Spirit*—the testimony of the Spirit of God to the truth of our adoption. I need bring no further proof that this doctrine is taught in the Bible, or that it has been held by evangelical Calvinists, but may consider the matter as settled.

What I would now urge is, that if a sensible evidence of adoption may be expected, that the same kind of evidence may be expected, with increased lustre, to accompany the different stages of our progress in holiness. If God vouchsafe to the merely justified an evidence of gracious acceptance, would he be likely to withhold from those, whose hearts are entirely consecrated to him, an evidence that the offering is accepted? Indeed, the doctrines of the evidence of adoption, and of entire sanctification in this life, being proved, it seems a matter of course that the inward testimony of

\* Annotations *in loc.*

† Annotations.

the Spirit to the truth of the latter, whenever it takes place, would be afforded. But this testimony must be sustained by other evidences, which I shall now proceed to notice.

2. The inward testimony must be accompanied by a consciousness of victory over sin.

*The body of sin being destroyed*, none of its *motions* must remain. I hope I have been sufficiently explicit on the subject of *temptations* and *infirmities*. We do not take these into the reckoning when we speak of the *motions* of sin, but refer wholly to those irregularities in the movements of the soul which are opposed to the will of God, and are consequently inconsistent with a state of entire conformity to that will. When the soul is entirely sanctified, all these irregular motions subside. Temptations may assault a soul in this state, but they wake up no rebellion, they agitate no unholy elements. The soul is firmly fixed upon the Rock of ages, and fully armed against every assault. The conflicts of such, though often severe, and sometimes protracted, finally terminate in a triumph over the enemy. They have not to bewail their sad defeats in the language of the poet,—

“ Here I repent, and sin again,  
Now I revive, and now am slain ;  
Slain by the same unhappy dart,  
Which oh ! too often wounds my heart.”

On the other hand their language is, “ Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

3. Another evidence of this high and holy state is a deep and constant current of love flowing out toward God and all mankind.

This love is the same in principle which is felt by the merely justified soul, but differs in its *strength* and



*uniformity.* The entirely sanctified soul loves God supremely, and without interruption. No earthly object intervenes between him and his God. Objects there are indeed which are dear to his heart, but they are placed in subordination to God. They are God's creatures, and are loved for his sake, but never take his place. This precious, perfect love of God burns like a fire in the heart of the fully sanctified. It melts down and consumes all obstacles—it "brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

The practical operations of this great principle are clearly and strongly represented by the great apostle. "Charity," (*αγαπη*, *love*,) says he, "suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth." 1 Cor. xiii, 4-8.

All this is fulfilled in those who are made perfect in love. And it would be strange if these various operations of love were not matters of personal consciousness—if the subjects of them were unable to distinguish between the genuine workings of this heaven-born principle and the operations of unsanctified affections.

It has been made a question whether this love is wholly disinterested, or whether it is consistent with any regard to our own interests or happiness. Upon this question there has been much idle and injurious speculation. I have no disposition to enter into the metaphysical subtleties in which this point has been involved, though a brief statement of the true views may be necessary here.

I conceive that all the *disinterested benevolence* that

has any foundation in the word of God is *a benevolence which does not suffer self to interfere with the public good, or with any revealed purpose of God*. Further than this we are not required in the Bible, nor indeed is it possible for us, in the present state, to give up a regard to our own personal interests. But this does not require us to be willing that we ourselves, or our children, or our friends, should be damned. God will undoubtedly send the wicked to hell, and he will be justified by the universe of intelligences in the act. But still it is a truth that he has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked," and what reason is there why we should have more "pleasure" in this fearful exhibition of God's justice than he has himself? If it were indeed possible for us to be willing to be damned ourselves, we should in that state of mind be wholly incompetent to feel the force of a world of motives set forth in the word of God. But if I understand the doctrine of disinterested benevolence, as it is called, it is something which *never has existed, never will, nor can exist* among men. It is a very different thing from the regard to the general interest, and an abandonment of the selfish principle—the principle of pursuing the interests of self at the expense of the general good—which is essential to religion and the well-being of society. This neither requires us to forfeit any real good, or to be reconciled to any real evil. But to proceed.

4. Perfect submission to the will of God is a state of mind which will always accompany entire sanctification.

The perfect Christian will have no will of his own; the will of God will be both his rule and his delight. When he knows this, though it may require him to make sacrifices, or to endure hardships, unexpected

and unparalleled, he says, "Thy will be done." All his motives and actions must be in accordance with the revealed will of God, so far as he is capable of understanding what that is. The father of the faithful was required to offer up his beloved son Isaac as a sacrifice upon one of the mountains of Moriah. And though a more costly sacrifice could not have been demanded of him, he instantly said, Isaac must be given up! This was a great effort of faith, and perhaps an unparalleled instance of submission. But we shall always meet occasions to try us whether we will do the will of God, *when it costs us something*. And if we pause and object when the manifestation of God's good pleasure is clear and undoubted, there is in us a want of entire conformity to the will of God.

5. Those who are made perfect in love will feel entire and unwavering confidence in God.

Storms may gather over the heads of the fully sanctified, dangers may threaten them, tempests of adversity may actually break upon them—they may see no way of escape; but though not able to walk by *sight*, they can walk by *faith*, and so they are not moved. St. John says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." 1 John iv, 18.

6. Such will enjoy uninterrupted communion with God.

That the Christian has fellowship with God is both presumed and directly declared in numerous places in the Scriptures. St. Paul speaks of the "fellowship of the Spirit," Phil. ii, 1; and "the communion of the Holy Ghost," 2 Cor. xiii, 14. And St. John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John i, 3. And Christ says, "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father

will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," John xiv, 23. All this implies—1. The presence of the holy Trinity. 2. Concord, or agreement. And, 3. Intercourse between God and the soul.

And this fellowship, it may be presumed, is *sensible*—it is something of which the soul is conscious. It is not a flight of the imagination, nor an ecstasy, but a consciousness of the presence, the love, and the favour of God, which fill and elevate the soul. And what will interrupt this holy communion with God, if the mind is constantly fixed upon him? In the fully sanctified this heavenly intercourse is constant and uninterrupted.

“No changes of season or place,”—

no bodily sufferings or privations, no amount of temptations, will sunder the cords by which God and the sanctified spirit are united. Witness the triumphant language of St. Paul upon this subject: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom. viii, 35–39.

But this blessed security of the soul, it must not be forgotten, implies inviolable fidelity—its steadfast adherence to Christ. “The love of Christ” implies not only Christ’s love to us, but our love to him. And this

love, growing out of a lively faith, is the principle of reciprocity—of change and interchange between God and the soul. What then but some sad delinquency on our part, some want of the requisite purity of heart, will interrupt this intercourse? If then our love to God be “made perfect,” may it not be expected that our communion with him will be constant and uninterrupted? It may indeed vary in its sensible manifestations, but will not wholly subside until our iniquities separate between us and our God, and our sins hide his face from us. Isa. lix, 2.

Is not this a most blessed state—to feel that God is one with us, and makes his “face to shine upon us?” How it turns the world, which otherwise is a gloomy prison, into a paradise! But I must not enlarge.

7. In the last place I would observe, that the person who has come into this blessed state will be able to mark the several successive steps through which he passed from the lower stages of religious experience.

If your soul has passed the barrier between you and this full salvation, my dear brother, you can mark the period when your inward corruptions were a burden, intolerable to be borne—when you desired deliverance from them more than any thing beside: when you resolved, in the strength of God, to seek this great salvation; when it began to appear near at hand; when you was able to consider it as present, and claim it as your own. You can recollect the revolution which then took place in the whole train of your views and feelings. How gloriously resplendent appeared the character of God—the cross of Christ—the way of holiness! How easy it was to believe, to love, to obey;—how small you seemed to yourself;—how worthless all your best performances;—how the world receded from your view, and heaven and glory appeared to come down to



earth ;—how you desired that this heavenly state might be the common privilege of all Christians, and how you immediately began to talk of the great things God had done for you.

These I consider the evidences which in all ordinary cases may rationally and scripturally be expected to accompany the great change for which we contend. Some of them may be stronger than others, and some of them may be occasionally a little obscured by circumstances, but a careful examination will bring them to view. And where all these evidences are to be found, then it may safely be concluded God has wrought the great work of entire sanctification. But of the verity of the testimony the subject himself is, in the nature of the case, the only competent judge. He only can so analyze and understand his own feelings as to judge of them safely and truly. He consequently cannot safely submit his case to others for their authoritative decision. The matter is between him and his God : and though it will be useful for him to converse with eminently holy persons, and take their advice, and listen to their instructions, he must not go to any mortal for the decision of the great question, whether he has met the terms of entire sanctification, and received the impression of the seal upon his heart. This is a matter of consciousness and of induction which belongs wholly to himself, and which involves personal responsibilities which he can transfer to no other.

I will close this lecture with a single word of advice. Let those who are seeking the great blessing of a clean heart guard equally against *credulity* and *skepticism*.

You may be too ready to believe that God has wholly removed your corruptions. The suggestion that this is actually the case may be from the devil, designed by your arch foe to prevent you from truly coming into

the possession of the blessing by a thorough prosecution of the great work of seeking it with all your heart. As seekers of religion are sometimes deceived, and build an evidence of pardon upon a false basis, so may you conclude you are indeed fully sanctified before you are. I have little doubt but this is the case with many, and when they afterward find themselves possessed of evil tempers, they conclude they have lost the blessing, and then are naturally led into the erroneous and discouraging conclusion that it is a state most difficult if not impossible to be retained. It is consequently of great importance that we proceed with care in the examination of our hearts, and in judging of the indications that they are wholly the Lord's. It is dangerous to fail here. O how should we pray to God to *search* us, and *prove* us, and *teach* us *what we know not* !

But, upon the other hand, we may be too slow to understand the character of the work God is carrying on in our hearts. We may require higher and stronger demonstrations of its character and integrity than is consistent with the determinations of infinite wisdom. We may wish "a sign from heaven"—an extraordinary revelation, and may be unwilling to credit the truth of the work until this is vouchsafed. In this way we may rob our own souls of the comforts of the blessing, grieve the Holy Spirit, and give into the hands of the enemy a grand triumph. Our own unworthiness, our former unfaithfulness, or the greatness of the work, must not interfere to blind our eyes to God's gracious manifestations. The more unworthy the subject, and the greater the work, the more glory will redound to God. Turn your eyes then, my brethren, from yourselves to God—the amplitude of his gracious designs, and of his resources to carry them into full effect. Be not distrustful. He who commands the winds and the

seas is at the helm. Hear his interrogation, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" Let your answer be, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." And when the work is accomplished, be not like the nine lepers who went their way, but like the one *stranger* who returned, and with a loud voice gave glory to God. And be assured that you will glorify him truly by recognising his work in all its extent, and making no conditions upon which you will acknowledge the work accomplished. Simplicity of purpose, honesty and diligence, will secure you effectually against all deception.

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## LECTURE XIX.

### ADDRESS TO PROFESSORS OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," Matt. v, 16.

I FEEL it incumbent upon me, before I leave this subject, to give a word of advice to such as make profession of the blessing of entire sanctification. This part of my duty I approach with great diffidence, as I feel it would be much more appropriate for me to sit at the feet of those I address, and learn of them my duty, than to assume the character of an instructor to them. Knowing, however, that a prominent trait in the character of perfect Christians is deep humility, I cannot doubt but all such will be ready to receive instruction from even the feeblest of Christ's servants. This consideration gives me some confidence to proceed in the discharge of a duty which, under other circumstances, would be quite insupportable.

Permit me then, dear brethren, to enter somewhat

into detail, and urge upon your attention several things which I consider of great importance to your own spiritual prosperity, and your usefulness in the church and in the world. For advices of a general character, and for much special instruction, you will do well to consult Mr. Wesley's Plain Account of Christian Perfection, and Mr. Fletcher's Address to Perfect Christians. Little more indeed of importance can be said of a practical nature than may be gathered from these writers. A few points, however, need at the present time to be made more prominent, which existing circumstances require should be constantly present to the view of that class of persons whom I immediately address. The present position of the controversy:—the errors of several classes of perfectionists, and the perpetual effort to convict our system of a tendency to these errors:—the deep solicitude manifested upon the part of many serious persons, both among our own people, and of other Christian communions, to receive light upon the subject, and to be aided in their efforts for holiness:—devolve high responsibilities upon you. Perhaps there never was a time, since the age of the holy apostles, when it was more important that the doctrine of Christian perfection should appear a vital reality.

1. I would first advise you to study the doctrine of Christian perfection with great care.

The only infallible source of information upon the doctrines of religion is the Holy Bible. Read this blessed book, particularly the practical and devotional parts of it, with a desire to find the true standard of religious experience and practice which is there set up. Read this book with attention, read it with reverence, read it with solicitude, read it with prayer. When you open the sacred pages of the book of books, let your prayer to God be, "What I know not teach thou me."

Next to the Bible study Wesley's Plain Account. I say *study* it, for "*plain*" as is that "*account*," it is by no means to be understood fully without study and reflection. The definitions, the distinctions, the arguments, should be so thoroughly impressed upon your minds that you can conceive of and use them with circumstantial accuracy at any moment. The want of the accurate knowledge of what Mr. Wesley says upon many points of this great subject, on the part of those who profess to follow him, and particularly those who profess this blessing, has often led them to express themselves inconsistently, and thus to give occasion for great scandal. Our opponents do not fail to take advantage of all such cases, and to use them to the great prejudice of the doctrine itself. I do not say that you cannot *enjoy* the blessing of perfect love without the clear understanding of the subject here inculcated—I speak with reference to your *usefulness*—the influence you will exert upon others, and especially the more thinking and intelligent portion of your fellow Christians.

Next to Mr. Wesley read Mr. Fletcher. His productions upon the subject of Christian perfection are logical, argumentative, and powerfully persuasive. There is an unction accompanying his thoughts and language which touches the secret springs of the soul, and eminently prepares it to receive instruction, and to enter upon immediate action.

Read the lives of the holy men and women who lived and died in the enjoyment of perfect love:—such as Bramwell, Carvosso, Mrs. Fletcher, Lady Maxwell, and Mrs. Rogers. These will give you light as well as heat—will present clearly the practical workings of the principle.

Finally, converse with wise and godly persons upon



the subject upon all proper occasions ; and be sure that you always manifest, upon these occasions, a teachable spirit. Do not think, because you are older in religion, or have experienced more of the blessings of the great salvation than others, that therefore they can teach you nothing. If it be true that you are much *better* than they are, still they may be much *wiser* than you are, and it becomes you to learn all you can, even from those who may be your inferiors in all respects, and certainly from those who are your superiors in wisdom, and in the consideration and confidence of the church.

I urge these efforts to acquire clear and consistent views upon the subject of Christian perfection, because upon you devolves the great responsibility of practically carrying out and sustaining the great principles which it involves. Those Christians who are skeptical with regard to the doctrine will turn their eyes from our *books*, and gaze upon *you*, and they will try your words, and scrutinize your language : and if they see evidence to believe that you know not what you say, nor whereof you affirm, what will be their conclusion ? They will too frequently reason from particulars to generals, and say these professors of Christian perfection are all bewildered—they can give no intelligible account of the matter—they do not understand their own authors. And they will be likely to conclude that the cause of all this confusion of thought arises from the nature of the subject, or the manner in which it has been treated. And thus the cause is injured—the theme itself is degraded, when the fault is only yours. O, how much has this great gospel doctrine suffered through the unskilfulness of its professed friends ! Brethren, I would have you always awake to the greatness, the magnificence of the subject, and ever jealous of its honour,

and jealous of yourselves, lest the doctrine, true, and lovely, and glorious as it is, should suffer reproach through the ignorance of its chief representatives.

But the *credit of the doctrine* is not the only reason why it should be well understood by those who profess to have felt its power. It is of infinite importance to themselves. How many begin well in the career of Christian holiness, who soon relax their efforts, and lose their interest in the subject! This general fact may result from several causes: but I doubt not a very common cause will be found to be radical mistakes as to the nature of the blessing they were seeking, or had measurably received. They had taken up the erroneous conclusion that the state of entire sanctification implied a kind of physical renovation, or visions and revelations, or a series of ecstasies, or at least a constant tide of joy. Finding their feelings to subside and to vary through physical causes or change of circumstances, they have been led to the conclusion that the state is above mortality, or at least *too high* for *them*, and so they have let go their hold. Timely and proper instruction upon the subject would probably have guarded them against these sad reverses, and have enabled them to hold on their way, and wax stronger and stronger, instead of falling into the snare of the grand adversary. If, then, you would be proof against the devices of the devil, you must avoid capital errors; and if you would avoid capital errors, you must carefully study the subject.

2. The next advice I would give is, that you beware of spiritual pride.

By spiritual pride, I mean too high an opinion of your own piety and usefulness. You are imminently exposed to this temptation, from the circumstance that your character and professions will bring around you

many persons who may be greatly your superiors in many respects, but who will often seek your advice and instructions touching the way of holiness. Beware lest such instances should work upon your spirit—should give you high ideas of yourselves—should elevate you, in your own estimation, above your brethren. There may be many reasons for mortification and self-abasement of which you are not aware, and there is imminent danger of suffering your zeal in the cause of holiness to degenerate into a desire for distinction and pre-eminence. Should you be taken by this snare of the grand adversary, you might be led on to affect eminent sanctity from selfish motives, and ultimately be left to fall and perish !

This deadly foe to true Christian perfection, spiritual pride, sometimes develops itself in a kind of affected humility. All studied efforts to show off our low views of ourselves—either a phraseology or a general bearing which evidently exhibits an *effort* to *appear* humble—is looked upon by the observing with distrust. A simplicity of manner, and an unaffected humility, which can only result from a thorough knowledge of ourselves—of our weakness, unprofitableness, ignorance, and short comings—are the true ornaments of the Christian character ; and must not be wanting, especially in *you*.

3. Beware of putting too much confidence in extraordinary manifestations.

I would by no means throw doubt on such extraordinary instances of divine communications, and immediate answers to prayer, as are to be found in the history of the religious experience of some pious persons ; nor would I lightly estimate such peculiar divine interpositions. But what I would have you guard against is, a notion that these things are always an accompani-

ment of an eminent degree of Christian holiness. God was never prodigal of miraculous gifts, nor were these always the strongest evidences of deep communion with him. St. Paul supposes it possible to have a *wonder-working faith*, and yet to be without *charity*. But the age of miracles has passed away, and the holiest men and women upon earth are equally subject with others to the ordinary laws of nature and providence, and compelled to "walk by faith, not by sight." We should remember that the highest excellence, and the sum of all perfection, is *love*: to love God with all the heart is more to be desired than the power to raise the dead to life. This is the true glory of the Christian character, and the most acceptable to God of all attainments which may be imagined possible.

4. Beware of all extravagances in your religious exercises.

I would not discourage a Scriptural and reverent expression of feeling in your religious devotions—far from it—I would encourage and urge this as a duty, as well as a privilege. But all *undue* and *overstrained* efforts of the voice—all uncouth contortions of the body—any thing in gesture or language calculated to excite ludicrous emotions, or to bring religion in general, or Christian perfection in particular, into contempt, should be carefully avoided. Every one knows well the difference between true religion and extravagant muscular exertion. No one ever understood this better than did Mr. Wesley himself, and no man ever spoke more decidedly and scripturally upon the subject than he did. Labour always to feel chastened, fervent, holy emotions, and your outward expressions will be decent, grave, and impressive. You will be likely to give no offence to good taste, and to give no occasion to the devil to buffet you. True devotional feeling is the

result of divine influence, and is not to be *got up* by physical efforts. Prayer and faith—wrestling with God—is the appointed way to the inner sanctuary of deep communion with the Invisible.

5. On all proper occasions communicate to your brethren what God has done for you.

The lamp of holiness is not lit up to be put under a bushel, but to be set up in a prominent place, that it may give light to all around. Nor is there any reason why God should not be glorified in this great and precious gift, in the same manner that he is in the lower degrees of grace. But I say on all *proper* occasions, and not on all occasions indiscriminately. And as to what are proper occasions, you must generally judge for yourselves. It is easy to see that it would not be proper to speak of your attainments in this respect in the presence of a mixed assembly, where there were many who would not be edified, but, on the other hand, would be scandalized or offended by it: nor would it be proper to do so in conversation with scoffers, or cavillers, or any of the various classes of opposers of the doctrine of Christian perfection. And it is equally easy to see that it would be proper to give an account of your experience of this blessing in select meetings of Christian brethren, and in conversation with such as are inquiring anxiously after the truth, and are prepared to listen to your relations with candor, and to profit by your experience. And this is all, perhaps, that it is necessary or would be proper for me to say upon this point. It will often require much wisdom to determine when to speak and when to keep silent upon the subject. This wisdom is to be gained by experience and observation, and he who has the most of it will be likely to render most service to the cause of holiness.



6. Endeavour to preserve a perfect consistency between your professions and practice.

You profess to love God with all your heart. Think, O think, what high expectations this profession raises in the church! If now you are unsteady in your religious course—if your life is defective in the savour of piety—if you are not always prepared to make great sacrifices, and to perform great labours, for the honour of Christ and the salvation of men—how sad will be the disappointment! Do not suppose that your personal enjoyments, be they ever so genuine, will be accepted instead of active zeal in all the great duties of religion. You must not live for yourselves alone: you must live for Christ—you must live for the church—you must live for the world. Christ, the church, and the world, unite in laying these claims, and in your professions of perfect love you acknowledge their equity.

7. Finally, I would urge that most necessary and salutary caution of St. Paul, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

Upon this point I must beg your indulgence if I dwell a little longer than upon any of those which I have previously presented. It would certainly seem, from this language, that the apostle supposes it possible for appearances of evil to develop themselves when no evil is intended, or even suspected by us. Let us illustrate the subject by a few cases.

An undue devotion to business, extreme rigour in pressing our claims, and stinted contributions to benevolent objects, may result from our honest convictions of duty to our families, our creditors, and ourselves; but will often have the *appearance* of a worldly spirit, and of that covetousness which is idolatry. A boisterous manner in prosecuting a controversy, extreme

sensitiveness under injuries, and great violence in opposing error or sin, may appear to us like the operations of a religious regard for the truth, a proper and commendable self-respect, and a zeal for the cause of God ; but to others all this may appear like the effervescence of unholy tempers—may look very much like the workings of angry passions. Our dress and equipage may seem to us only *decent* and *comfortable* ; but to the great mass around us may appear like the fruits of pride. Our social habits may in our view be only such as are required by our social relations ; but may appear to others to savour of a love of worldly and gay society. Our manner and spirit may to us appear merely cheerful ; but to all others we may seem trifling. Or we may, on the other hand, design to be merely grave, reserved, and dignified in our manner ; but may appear to all beside, if not austere and scornful, yet sour, cold, and repulsive. We may value ourselves upon our character for plainness and primitive simplicity, when we appear to all persons of good taste, vulgar, coarse, and reckless of all the decencies of life. It is often said, I am a plain, old-fashioned man—I speak right out, just as I think. All very well, if this be not said to justify indelicate assaults upon the feelings of others, or a want of respect for the views and opinions of those who are entitled to respectful consideration and kind brotherly treatment. We may design to pour just contempt upon some absurd opinion or practice ; but may appear to all the world as making large efforts to display our own wit, or gratify feelings of personal revenge. We may seem to ourselves discharging an imperative duty in administering public reproof ; but our manner may savour more of censoriousness than of the spirit of brotherly love. We may cultivate a zealous manner in our religious exercises, and may be

really ardent in our feelings and honest in all our expressions ; and yet we may appear to others to affect more than we feel—there may seem to be more sound than sense—more noise than spirit in our religion.

But I forbear. Illustrations might be multiplied indefinitely, but I must give no more, lest I should be tedious. I hope I shall not be misunderstood. I mean simply to illustrate and enforce the apostle's exhortation. And if it mean any thing, it certainly puts an importance upon *appearances* which too many are unwilling to admit. If I have not entirely mistaken in the matter, we are here prohibited not only all real wrong-doing, but all appearances of wrong, either in practice or principle. If this be the right view of the subject we are not at liberty to be entirely reckless as to the opinions which may be formed of our actions. It is not enough that our *motives* have been *good*. This would indeed be all that would be required if we were solitary beings—if we were not associated with other men, and constantly acting upon them, and contributing to form their character and habits. But as it is, we must take heed what impressions we make upon the minds around us.

The truth seems to be, that it is *the appearance of evil* that does the harm to society. If I perform an act which *appears* to all the world wrong, the goodness of my motives will not neutralize its influence upon the moral feelings of community. Should we ever, then, forget that “we are made a spectacle to the world?” Should we be entirely careless of public opinion? Should we think it a light thing that we have conducted ourselves so indiscreetly as to be misunderstood, and to have our motives impugned? All this evil may come upon us when we have done our very best. But even then we should deeply regret it, and

carefully and anxiously inquire whether the mischief may not have originated in some negligence on our part, and how the like evil is to be avoided in the future. Let us never forget, that if our actions, words, or spirit have "the appearance of evil," we are in all such cases inflicting a wound upon the moral feelings of others—our example is essentially injurious—and so far we are helping on the cause of sin and error! What an astounding consideration is this to a tender conscience! And shall we diligently labour to build up the cause of Christ with one hand, and pull it down with the other? Shall we, through our want of true Christian prudence, more than neutralize all our exertions in the cause of truth and holiness? God forbid. Will we suffer others with lower religious attainments to exert a better influence upon society? This would be truly lamentable. It would indeed be, in a sense, to hide our talent in the earth.

The good of society, the glory of God, and our own dearest interests call loudly upon us to heed this wise and always timely admonition. It comes home with peculiar force to those who have experienced the blessing of perfect love. You, dear brethren, of all others, should be without reproach—should keep your garments unspotted from the world. There should be a circumspection, a vigilance, an integrity, an uprightness of life that will always impress the beholder with respect for your character and professions. You should not only be *pure*, but *unsuspected*. There should be no *appearances* which do not exactly correspond with the principles and feelings of your hearts. Upon your life, your actions, your words, your countenance, your spirit, should be inscribed, "Holiness to the Lord."

But should any inquire, how all this elevation of cha-

racter and consistency of behaviour are to be attained ? I would answer, that one habit properly established will, with that constant divine aid which God has promised to the faithful, secure the object. *Only have always resting upon your heart a sense of the importance of the impressions you are making upon others.* This state of mind will lead you to a daily examination of yourself, and a strict scrutiny of your ways. And you will acquire a clearness of perception and an acuteness of discrimination as to what acts are in keeping with your high professions, which will save you from a multitude of errors, which, though small in themselves, are still blemishes in your character. All our faculties, both of body and mind, are improved by exercise. Exercising your moral sense, or, if you please, your conscience, will increase its power of discrimination : and, hence, if we desire to acquire a tender and a discriminating conscience, we must task it with an abundance of labour. If we would have a clear spiritual vision, we must habitually exercise it upon minute objects—upon small matters—upon *appearances* of evil. Mr. Wesley says, “He that neglects little things shall fall by little and little.” How many have proved the truth of this maxim by sad experience !

But never forget that all your help must come from *above*. If you have the grace to avoid evil, and the wisdom to “abstain from all appearance of evil,” the God of all grace and wisdom must give it to you. All our righteousness, all our strength, all our wisdom, are directly from God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom be glory for ever and ever. AMEN.





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